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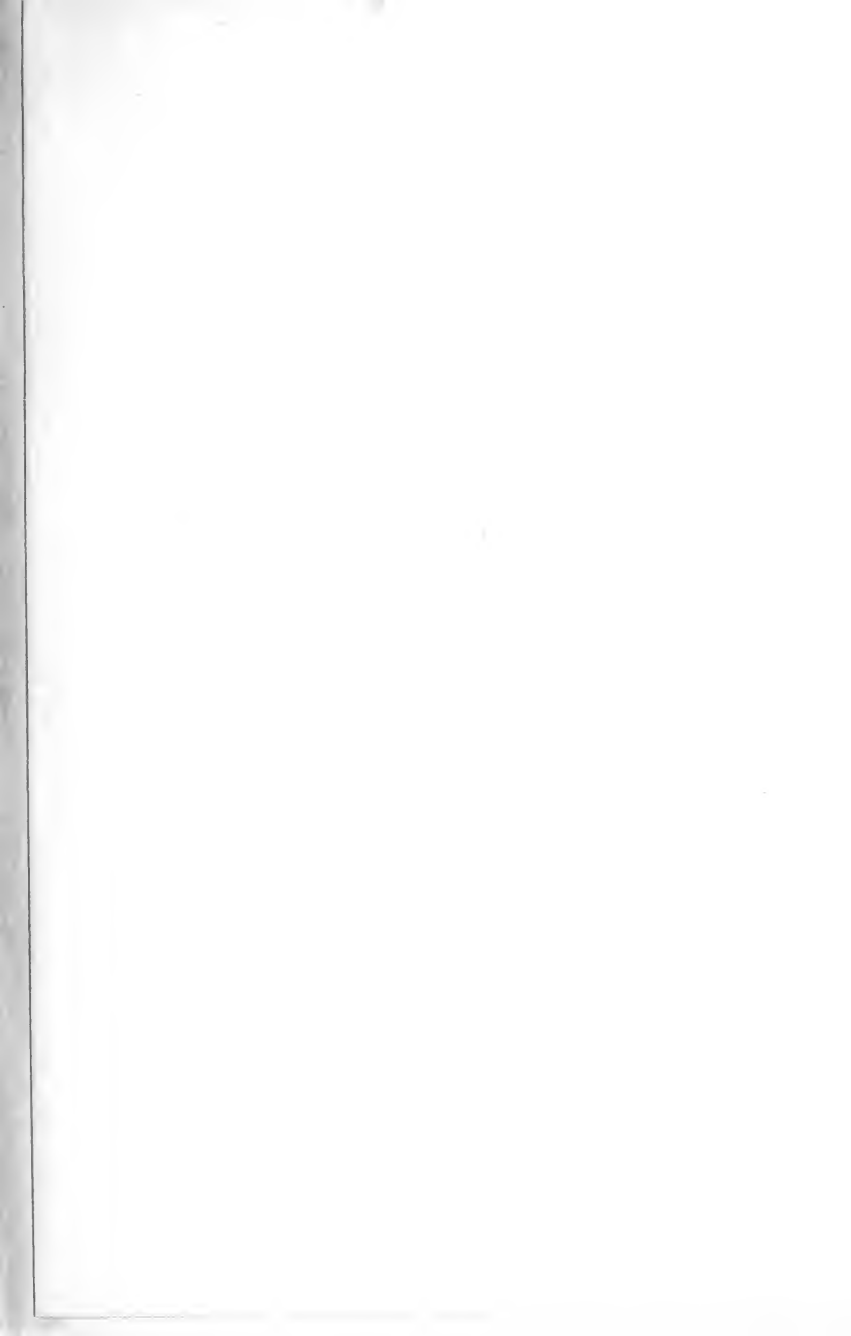
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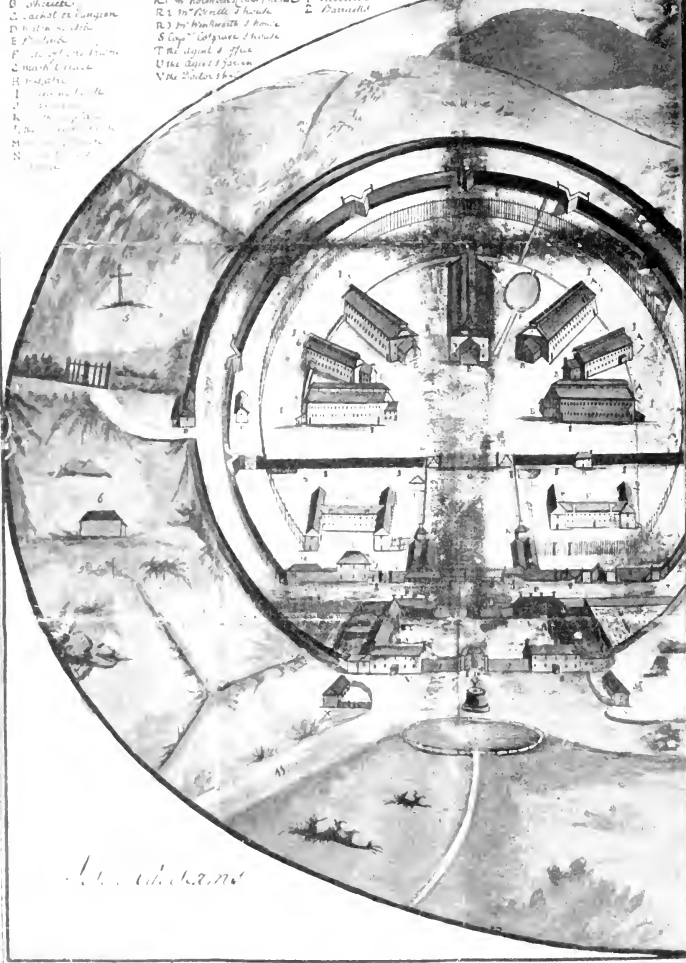
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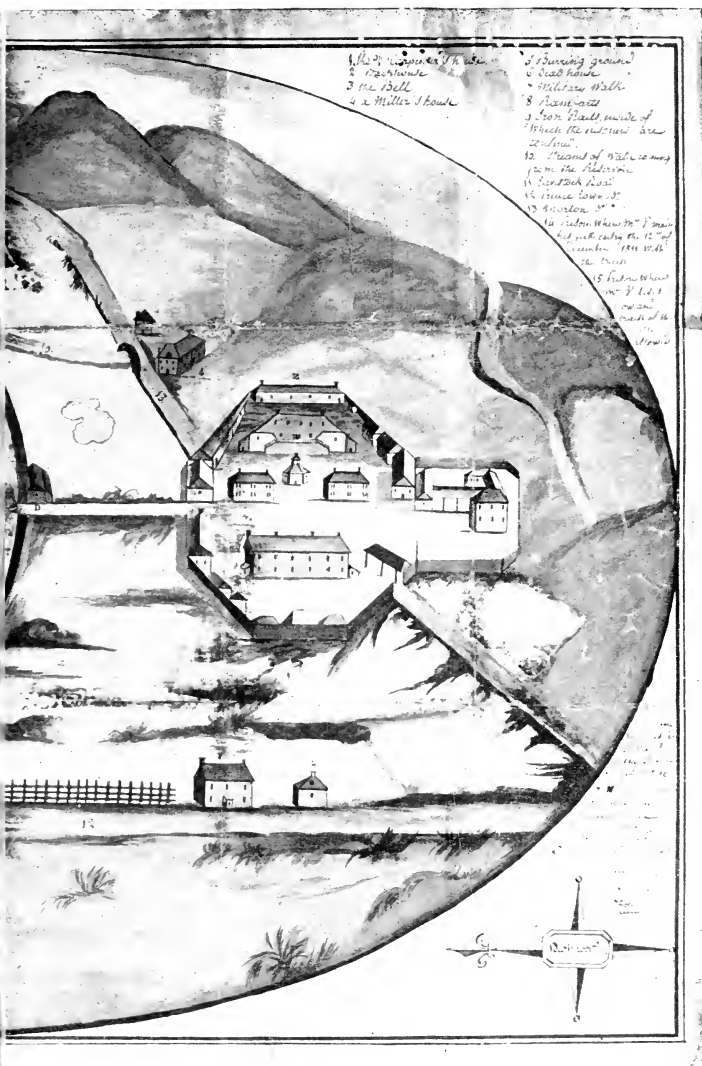
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A. Mifflin

THE WAR F  
 From a Coloured Sketch pres



ON IN 1812.  
 d in the Admiralty Records.

ALBION

# THE STORY OF DARTMOOR PRISON

BY  
BASIL THOMSON

*WITH FRONTISPIECE*



LONDON  
WILLIAM HEINEMANN  
1907

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## PREFACE

It was by caprice that Fate chose fifteen acres in the heart of the Dartmoor highlands for one of her strangest experiments. Within the double ring of masonry were met men who had been gathered from nearly every nation under heaven to fight against England under the Tricolour and the Stars and Stripes, and were here set to evolve a new social order under conditions that are probably unique in human history. The War Prison was an overcrowded city without women ; with its own laws, its schools, manufactures and arts, its workshops where coin could be counterfeited and Bank of England notes forged. In a society composed of persons drawn from every social rank, from the officer of the *Grande Armée* and the negro general from Hayti to the Sansculotte from the Faubourg St. Antoine, it is not surprising that monstrous growths should be produced, and I do not think that

anywhere in history can be found figures so horrible and grotesque as the "Romans." The life of the War Prison, it is true, was not made up of horrors. It throbbed with romance and comedy and tragedy, but on this tiny stage in a short hundred years the play has been an object lesson of the distortion of human nature wrought by war and by crime.

To one who has spent seven years in and about the sombre granite walls of Dartmoor Prison as I have, every stone of the old buildings seems alive with the voices of this strange company, and I have never understood why it should have been left to so late a comer to write the first connected history of the most famous prison in England. There was ample material. Besides the Admiralty records, there are the narratives of three prisoners of war—one Frenchman and two Americans. All that I have taken from these rests upon the clearest evidence: I have rejected many amusing and dramatic stories that have obviously tempted the narrator to exaggerate.

I owe thanks to my friends Mr. Brooking Rowe and Mr. William Crossing for some useful information about the early history of Princetown, to

Mr. F. C. Hodder for assistance in searching the Admiralty archives, and to Captain Vernon Harris, one of my predecessors in the governorship of the prison, for the loan of his interesting pamphlet which is now out of print.

B. T.

LONDON, *October*, 1907



# THE STORY OF DARTMOOR PRISON

## CHAPTER I

IN the year 1771 there was neither road nor habitation between Dousland Barn and the ancient tenements near Postbridge. Rough pack-horse tracks followed the line of the present main roads, crossing the river at Okery, Beardown, Dartmeet, and Postbridge on "clapper" bridges, but the site of Princetown and its famous prison was a desolate peat bog. In 1772 an Act was passed for the construction of a road for wheel traffic across the moor from Moretonhampstead to Tavistock. But for this road Dartmoor Prison would never have existed.

At that time agriculture was still considered the most profitable investment for capital, and travellers by the new road began to dream of converting the wastes on either side into smiling homesteads. In 1780 Mr. Gullet began operations at Prince Hall and Mr. Bray at Beardown Farm, and five years later Mr. Thomas Tyrwhitt, who knew Dartmoor through being Secretary to the Prince of Wales, began to lay

out a farm at Tor Royal. Tyrwhitt was a man of sanguine and optimistic temperament. His belief in the potentialities of the moor seems pathetic to us who know how he poured money into it and how he died at last a poor man. His ambition was to found a settlement to be named after his patron, the Prince, and to this end he made the old road to Two Bridges fit for wheel traffic and formed new roads to Tor Royal and Rundlestone. Opposite the toll gate as the nucleus of his village, he built an inn, "The Plume of Feathers," and a few cottages, and at Okery Bridge he built a mill. The miller's house and the inn owe their foreign appearance to his travels as one of the Commissioners sent to confer the Garter upon the Emperor Alexander of Russia. But his sanguine schemes for the development of the moor languished. Something more than a public-house and half a dozen empty cottages are wanted to make a village. When his opportunity arrived, as it did in 1805, his village became a busier place than he had dared to hope for.

On May 18th, 1803, when the peace of Amiens was but nineteen months old, war was again declared between France and England. The two inland war prisons at Norman Cross, near Peterborough, and Stapleton, near Bristol, were soon filled, and in the spring of 1805 six third-rate prison ships were maintained at Plymouth at an annual cost of £18,000, and fresh batches of prisoners were arriving every

day.<sup>1</sup> It was clear that another war prison was necessary, and in a letter to the Admiralty, dated June 26th, 1805, the Transport Board, a sub-department of the Admiralty charged with the care of sick and wounded seamen and prisoners of war, suggests Dartmoor as being "a most eligible and healthy situation for such a purpose." The letter goes on to say that the Board had already applied to Mr. Tyrwhitt, Lord Warden of the Stannaries, who had signified to them the consent of the Prince of Wales "to our having whatever quantity of the moor we may find necessary for a prison without any other charge to the public than the expense of an Act of Parliament to transfer the property from the Duchy of Cornwall to the Crown."<sup>2</sup> Tyrwhitt represented Plymouth in 1806, and as he was constantly in the society of the authorities of the dockyard it is probable that the proposal of Dartmoor as a site came from him. We shall see later how bitterly his choice was assailed.

The two reasons given by the Board for building a new prison were "the impropriety of keeping a great

<sup>1</sup> The annual cost of prisoners of war, which was £57,271 6s. 6d. in 1803, rose year by year to £916,418 2s. 5d., in 1814. Of this sum £762,762 6s. 5d. was spent for the maintenance of the French prisoners only.

<sup>2</sup> The proposed Act was never passed: a lease of 390 acres for 99 years was executed as a preliminary step, and in 1816 the lease was surrendered to the Duchy, who continued to pay the rates and taxes on the buildings until a fresh lease was executed for the Convict Prison in 1849.

body of prisoners of war in the immediate neighbourhood of any of the principal arsenals, and the very great expense unavoidably attendant on prison ships": Dartmoor was within a day's march of Plymouth and yet far enough to ensure the safety of the Arsenal in case of a rising; the land was to cost them nothing, and by a curious feat in arithmetic they were actually counting upon saving money on the transaction; for if, as they were assured, they could provide for 5,000 men at a cost of £60,000, in three years, the prison ships, which cost them £18,000 a year, could be abolished. Their finance might have been sound if the prisoners when removed to Dartmoor would be content to live upon air, but as "My Lords" made no comment upon this part of their calculations we may assume that their anxiety for the safety of the Arsenal outweighed the question of expense.

The first step was to choose the site. On July 18th a member of the Board met Mr. Daniel Alexander, a London architect, at Tor Royal, and under Tyrwhitt's guidance they "examined a variety of situations on Dartmoor, and fixed at length upon a place near Mr. Tyrwhitt's lodges." The reasons they give are that the water is excellent and plentiful (which is true of most parts of the moor); that the soil is gravel (which it is not); that the site is covered with peat from two to four feet deep, which will be useful for fuel; that there is building stone upon the spot; and lastly—the only sound reason—



that it is near the turnpike road frequented by carriers from Moreton and Ashburton, who would be content to sell their wares at a cheaper rate instead of carrying them on to Plymouth. They might have saved themselves the labour of their tour of inspection; Tyrwhitt had already fixed the site, not because it was the best, but because it would create the settlement on which he had set his heart. There were many better sites. Roborough Down and Walhampton Common were both superior, or, if it was necessary to go to the high moor in order to be within the Duchy property, there was the slope above Two Bridges. The position they chose on the south-west slope of North Hessary is often wrapped in dense fog when the surrounding country is clear, and is colder and more rainy than places only four miles distant; and in compelling Frenchmen to live in such a place in winter without fires the Government was ignorantly committing an act of positive cruelty.

Mr. Alexander's first estimate of £86,423 13s. 4d. staggered the Admiralty, and a second plan was prepared, cutting down the area of the prison from 23 to 15 acres 2 roods, and estimated to cost £70,146 4s. 10d. Besides five prison buildings holding 1,000 men each, there was to be a hospital, Petty Officers' prison, and barracks for 500 troops. Four tenders were sent in, the highest for £115,337, and the lowest—that of Isbell, Rowe & Co.—for £66,815, which was accepted, though it was evident to the

architect that under the most favourable conditions they could not hope for a profit of more than ten per cent. on the contract.

It may seem strange that an establishment as temporary in its nature as a war prison should be built of so lasting a material as granite at a time when the Government was in great financial straits. The explanation is that granite was the cheapest material then to be had. Galvanised iron had not been invented; timber could only be procured at a prohibitive price; bricks were not made on or near the moor, but granite could be had, for nothing except the cost of labour in quarrying.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is evident throughout the correspondence that everyone was prepared for a long war.

The cost of labour made up three-fourths of the estimate. It was at first proposed to employ soldiers; then to bring down masons from the Yorkshire moors; but Mr. Alexander was soon able to report that "the masons in the country are beginning to rouze" and that he could get them from Cornwall at lower wages than he had estimated. In staking off the ground he also found a quantity of loose surface blocks which would save the expense of quarrying, and so much water above the site that he "could run off the peat

<sup>1</sup> In one of his letters to the contractors the architect says that he had purposely used stone and iron wherever possible on purpose to avoid the expense of timber. In November, 1806, the supply of timber in Plymouth was so short that even by paying £12 a load fifty loads could not be procured.

on to the lower parts of the moor without the labour of excavation"—an experiment that must have disappointed him not a little when he came to try it.<sup>1</sup>

Four Plymouth firms tendered for the contract. Rowell & Co. demanded £115,337 ; Sheppard & Co., who appear to have made the most careful estimate, reckoned a bare 10 per cent. profit on £84,828 ; but, as usually happens, the Government accepted a tender so low that the contractor could only save himself from ruin by scamping and delaying the work, and gave the contract to Isbell, Rowe & Co. at £66,815, more than £3,000 less than the estimate, and had to pay dearer for the work in the end. The most notable clause in the contract was one enabling the Admiralty to terminate the contract at any moment on the proclamation of peace.

Each prison building was to cost £4,400, and the boundary walls and water-courses £13,756 10s. 1d. The work began in mid-winter, and the haste with which the masons set to work may be judged from the state of the rough walls to-day, when they are but a century old, and have been repeatedly pointed and braced to hold them together. In less than two months the contractors' troubles began. The Cornish masons had "begun to rouze" to some purpose, and the price of labour had risen one-fifth. They had

<sup>1</sup> The granite was quarried at Herne Hole, the site of the present prison quarry, to which a tram line was laid.

estimated on the basis of being always able to obtain their timber at £5 a load, but the contract was scarcely signed when the price began to rise. With the blockade of the Prussian ports it jumped to £7 ; in December, 1806, it stood at £8 8s., and was still rising. All the eloquence of the contractor failed to move the Admiralty to pay the difference : the most that the Board would do was to allow the increased duty, and, this being the last word upon the controversy, the contractor turned sulky and informed the architect that in order to save their families from ruin they would now discharge their workmen and leave the unfinished prison to its fate. This brought the Admiralty to its senses : a compromise was agreed to by which sufficient timber to complete the building was supplied from the Devonport dockyard at a valuation, and ship's timbers and oaken knees may still be seen in the roof-work of one of the prisons.

The poor contractors must often have regretted their enterprise. "This hath been a hindering week," they write in November, 1805 ; "the sun hath scarcely made its appearance, and we may safely say that £120 hath been lost this week in wages"! A little later they represented to the Government that the road from Roborough Rock to Princetown had become impassable for their waggons, and received from Whitehall the unsatisfying assurance that their only remedy lay in proceeding against the way-wardens of the parish by indictment. We have a picture of the

place in a report of a member of the Transport Board who inspected it in September, 1807. The prisons were then being slated; the agent's and officers' houses were bare walls; the barracks had not got beyond the foundations; the yards were so littered with material of all kinds that the water-courses had not been begun; the road that was to run past the gate was nothing but a deeply-rutted cart track, about which were scattered temporary huts for the workmen. The architect had promised occupation by Christmas, but the writer declares that to put prisoners into such buildings in the depth of winter would be cruel, and that they could not be ready before the end of the next summer. But when August came things were not much better. Most of the houses were then finished, but every chimney smoked; the concrete floors of the prisons had blistered and needed repair, and the flights of stone steps leading to the sentry boxes had already broken down owing to the careless way in which they had been inserted in the wall. All the walls required repointing. Many of the workmen had been paid off, and it was clear that another winter must pass before the place was ready for occupation. It is interesting to find in this report that the firs planted for the protection of the prison were thriving so well that they already needed thinning. Looking at them now no one would guess that they were a century old.

In October, 1808, Captain Isaac Cotgrave, agent

for prisoners of war at Plymouth, was appointed agent at Dartmoor at his own request. George Macgrath, the surgeon of Mill Prison, was recommended as surgeon, and it would have been well if he had been appointed at this date instead of four years later, but the Admiralty chose Mr. George Dykar, who had served in the American War of Independence, and who seems to have been a typical naval surgeon of that day—harsh, ignorant, and not over skilful. The Admiralty intended, no doubt, to occupy the prison that winter, but wiser counsel prevailed, and it was not until May 24th, 1809, that the first draft of 2,500 men marched up from Plymouth. By the end of June 5,000, the full number for whom accommodation had been provided, had arrived.

## CHAPTER II

THUS far the prison had cost the Government about £74,000, including all extras, but, as it was afterwards considerably enlarged and rearranged, I will reserve a description of it to a later page. There were then, as afterwards, two boundary walls, but the outer one was only eight feet high, and it was therefore useless to prevent escapes until in the year 1812 it was raised to a height of twelve feet like the other. The lower half of the enclosure contained five prisons instead of seven, disposed in a semicircle radiating from a common centre. This was the fashion of prison architecture of the period, the object being to ensure to each building an equal share of light and air, while affording to the sentries on the walls a clear view of the yards between. A strong wrought iron grille on granite posts prevented the prisoners from getting nearer than fifteen feet from the inner wall, and also cut them off from the upper portion which contained the petty officers' prison (now the Infirmary), the Hospital (now the tailors' shop) and the various offices. There were no bell wires on the walls, and instead of the

cookhouses afterwards built on to each prison, there was a large central kitchen. The walls isolating No. 4 prison were not built until 1812, and there was therefore free communication between all the yards. The garrison of 500 men was quartered in the barracks, and entered the prison through the main gate to man the walls: it was not until 1811 that a postern was opened by prison labour in the outer wall opposite the barracks. This postern is still marked by a lintel engraved by the French mason with his name in ill-spelled French. The main gate inscribed "Parcere Subjectis," built of megalithic masonry, is reproduced upon the cover of this volume.

The official title of the establishment was "The Depot at Dartmoor," and all the forms used by the clerks were so headed. The officer in command was a post-captain in the Navy drawing his full pay, and was styled the "Agent." Up to 1812 the garrison numbered 500, but when the Americans began to give trouble it was gradually increased until it exceeded 1200 men of all arms.

The following was the staff of the prison:—

Captain Cotgrave, R.N., Agent.

William Dykar, Surgeon, £491.

William Dickson, Assistant Surgeon, £147.

1 Dispenser.

3 Hospital Mates.

1 Matron.



- I Sempstress.
- I Steward.
- I First Clerk.
- I Store Clerk.
- I Market Clerk.
- I Extra Clerk.
- 10 Turnkeys.
- 3 Labourers.
- I Foreman of Works.
- I Plumber.
- I Carter.
- I Mason.
- I Slater.
- I Blacksmith.
- I Navigator. (The duties of this curious appointment are not described.)

The garrison consisted of a battalion of Militia under the command of officers of Regulars, the battalion being changed every two months, partly because they could not be trusted not to fraternise with the prisoners, and partly to relieve them of the hardships of their situation. Besides the North and South Devon Militia, the East Kents, the Herefords, the Royal Cheshires, and the Roscommons took their turn at this duty, and as the war dragged on regiments from the North and from Scotland went into garrison. In December, 1812, in view of the increased number of prisoners, it was thought well to

increase the garrison by a detachment of Artillery, which remained until the Americans were discharged. As sentries they ran considerable risk of assaults by stabbing and stone-throwing, and in the later day of the American disturbances the indignities suffered by the Somersetshire Militia had tragic consequences. Some regiments were worse than others: one, at any rate, was seething with disaffection, and would have sided with the prisoners against their officers if there had been any disturbance to put their discipline to the test. But of the two evils of being too friendly or too hostile the former turned out to be the least.

The prison was victualled by contractors who entered into a bond of £3,000 for the due performance of their contract. In spite of the statements of Charles Andrews (which are contradicted by the evidence of another American witness) it is clear that the Government spared no pains to provide rations of good quality, if the quantity was insufficient.

The daily allowance was as follows :

Monday and Tuesday.	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. fresh beef.
	$\frac{1}{2}$ lb. cabbage or turnips.
Thursday, Saturday,	1 oz. Scotch barley.
and Sunday . . .	$\frac{1}{3}$ oz. of salt.
	$\frac{1}{4}$ oz. onions.

The whole to be made into a strong broth in a copper, and served in messes of six portions.

Wednesday . . . . .	1½ lbs. of the best whole meal wheaten bread, equal to that issued to the Navy, and baked in 4½ lb. loaves. 1 lb. of good sound herrings, red and white pickled herrings to be issued alternately. 1 lb. potatoes. 1½ lbs. bread.
Friday . . . . .	1 lb. of good dry codfish. 1 lb. potatoes. 1½ lbs. bread.

This is far short of what is found necessary for convicts in the hungry air of Dartmoor, and it is not surprising that the prisoners found it insufficient. The provident divided their bread into three portions, one for each meal, but the reckless ate it all as soon as it was issued and went hungry for the remainder of the day.

The full diet for hospital patients was on a generous scale. 1 pint of tea, morning and evening, 16 oz. of white bread, 16 oz. of beef or mutton, 1 pint of broth, 16 oz. of greens or good sound potatoes, and 2 quarts of small beer, besides barley water acidulated with lemon juice. For patients suffering from debility, or capricious in appetite, the surgeon had

license to substitute for the beef fish, fowl, veal, lamb, or eggs.

There can be no doubt that the contractors cheated whenever they could do so undetected. The practice was for the agent, the surgeon, the first clerk, and two prisoners from each prison to inspect the bread as soon as the waggons arrived. A sample loaf was selected by the prisoners themselves from the general heap in the bread room. This was tasted by all the parties, and marked if judged equal to contract. The only occasion when the bread was rejected was on March 9th, 1813, when the whole of the batch provided by Gill and Hornbrook of Tavistock was sent back. But in the previous year Philip Thorne and Thomas Parry of Tavistock came forward and proved cheating on the part of Twynam and others, who after considerable delay were tried and sentenced to imprisonment. In May, 1814, the same Philip Thorne gave information against Gill and Hornbrook, but his demands to be paid in advance for his testimony were so extravagant that the Board, who had withheld payment for some months, decided not to proceed with the case. As late as 1819, Richard Fox, another informer, was complaining to the Admiralty that the evidence which he gave six years before had ruined him, and employment under the Admiralty was found for him.

### CHAPTER III

AT this period the present infirmary building, which was separated from the general prison by a wall, was known as the Petty Officers' prison. It contained naval and merchant service officers—officers who had forfeited their parole by misconduct or attempting to escape, and officers who had been attached to the St. Domingo expedition under General Rochambeau. The prisoners called it “Le petit Cautionnement” (Little Parole). In it were representatives of every profession—lawyers, doctors, merchants, shopkeepers, actors, musicians, artists, soldiers and sailors, and even a negro general who had served under Rochambeau, but could not obtain his parole because of the colour of his skin. Being outside the iron grille which encircled the common prison they had a yard of their own, and as many of them were drawing upon their bankers through London agents, and could buy provisions in the market, they formed a pleasant little society and lived in some comfort. Servants, sweepers and cooks were drawn from the other prisons and paid threepence a day to wait upon them and relieve them of menial tasks; furniture, such as

tables and chairs, were served out to them from the prison stores. They were made to elect from their number a president and a "Commissaire de Salle" for each of the six halls, who acted as governor, magistrate, and police. The Commissaires were responsible to the President and the President to Captain Cotgrave for the good order of the prison. Even in this building life was not uneventful. One day at dinner a man pulled out of the soup bucket of his mess a dead rat which he held up by the tail, whereupon heads and tails and feet were dredged up from every bucket in such numbers that they would have furnished limbs for fully a hundred animals. We may judge whether the regulation diet of the prisoners was sufficient, from the fact that out of all these Frenchmen of the middle classes only a handful of the most squeamish went without their soup that day. For a time the life of the cooks hung by a thread, and it was only upon the intervention of the Commissaire that the head cook was allowed to speak in his own defence. The coppers, as it seemed, had been filled with water overnight as usual, but through forgetfulness the covers had not been closed, and the coppers had thus been converted into rat traps. It had not occurred to the cooks to dredge them for dead bodies, and the meat and vegetables had been thrown in atop and the fires lighted.

Those who could not afford to buy provisions in the market were always hungry, and, although a

general spirit of gaiety prevailed, the fasting produced a tetchiness and a peppery susceptibility to wounded honour. A mere jest, a word spoken sharply, was followed by a challenge, and a duel fought with all the customary punctilio, though the weapons were scissor-blades and compass-legs mounted in wooden handles with a guard for the hand. Many duellists received dangerous wounds; some were even killed outright, and it was these deaths, as well as the suicides, that led to the protest of the Plymouth coroner that the inquests in a single year in the war prison had exceeded the combined inquisitions for the previous fourteen years.<sup>1</sup>

One duel led to much ill-feeling in the Petty Officers' prison. On August 15th, 1809, a procession was organised with a band at its head. Souillé, a man of forty and a maître d'armes, who had served three years in another English war prison before the Peace of Amiens, thinking himself slighted in not being entrusted with the honour of bearing the tricolour, tried to snatch it from the hands of a youth of eighteen who was carrying it. The boy resisted, and ended by giving him a drubbing with his fists. Souillé immediately challenged him, and as the lad knew

<sup>1</sup> In February, 1810, Mr. Whiteford, the coroner for Plymouth, complained of the burden thrown upon the parish in respect of juries summoned for inquests upon French prisoners "who have laid violent hands on themselves or been otherwise killed," which in a single year had outnumbered all the inquests he had held in the 14 preceding years. The Admiralty met this by undertaking to pay one shilling to every juryman instead of the 8d. previously paid by the parish.

nothing about fencing, his seconds decided that the duel should be fought with razor-blades mounted in wooden handles. The youth rushed impetuously upon his antagonist, who, by a stroke familiar to practised swordsmen, caught his right hand with the tip of his weapon, nearly severing the forefinger. Great sympathy was felt for the boy, and for a time Souillé was made to feel the force of public opinion.

On April 8th, 1812, two French prisoners fought with daggers, and inflicted such mortal wounds that they both died before they could be removed to the hospital. The jury returned a verdict of "homicide by accident" !

In June, 1814, there was a fatal duel between two fencing-masters, who were great friends until one morning they began to discuss the skill of their respective pupils. From words they came to blows, in which Jean Vignon got the worst of the encounter. Vignon rose, crossed his arms in defiance, and said that though he might be worsted with the fists, they would take small arms the next morning and see which was the better man ; the other declined the challenge on the ground that he fought no duels in prison. Next morning the quarrel was resumed in the yard, and they were seen to mount to the cock loft of No. 4 prison with their foils, and there an American prisoner found them—Vignon with his foil in hand, the other stooping to pick his weapon from the floor. While in this position he received a thrust from which he



died. Vignon was transported with grief at what he had done. He was found guilty of manslaughter at the August assize at Exeter, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

The punishment reserved for the gravest offences was expulsion from the "Petit Cautionnement." One day a shirt was stolen. A search of all the chests was made, and the thief was hailed before a tribunal composed of a president, two assessors, an "accusateur" and a "greffier." The accused, who was defended by an able speaker, was found guilty, but instead of the extreme penalty of expulsion, he was made ineligible to vote in any election, to belong to any mess, or to hold any communications with his fellows, except such as were indispensable. The humiliation so wrought upon the wretched man that he took to his hammock and refused to eat. He was removed to the hospital, where in a few days he died of a broken heart.

The following regulations, printed in French and English, were posted up in various parts of the prison :—

*Regulations which all prisoners of war are bound to observe.*

I. All orders given by the Agent who may have the superintendence of the prisoners, or by any other officer belonging to the prison, shall be attended to

and immediately executed by the prisoners without any dispute, reply or hesitation whatever.

The prisoners are forbidden to strike or even to menace or insult any officer, turnkey or other person employed in the prison, under the pain of losing their turn of exchange, of being closely confined in the cachot and forfeiting one-third of their ration, or suffering such other punishment as the Commissioners may think proper to direct.

II. The prisoners are strictly forbidden to fight, quarrel or excite any tumult or disorder in the prison, or in the places where they may be allowed to take the air, under pain of being confined in the cachot, or forfeiting one-third of their ration for a time proportioned to the offence.

III. All the prisoners shall answer to their call at the muster whenever the Agent shall direct, and if there shall be any error in the list delivered to the Agent, they shall point it out to prevent the confusion which might arise from any mistake in the name, and any prisoners who shall refuse to answer to his call shall be deprived of his ration until he shall submit.

IV. The prison shall be swept, scraped and washed by the prisoners in rotation as often and in such manner as the Agent shall order, and any prisoner who shall refuse to perform this service in his turn after having been warned of it shall be deprived of his ration until he shall comply. One prisoner out of every six shall be employed in this service, and during the time that they shall be employed in cleaning the prison, all the prisoners except those who shall be so employed at the moment must quit the apartment or room of the prison.

V. If any damage should be done to the prison in which prisoners are kept, either in their attempts to escape or by design, all the prisoners in the room where the damage may have been done shall be put on two-thirds rations until, by such deduction, the expense of repairing the damage shall be made good.

VI. Any prisoner who shall be taken attempting to escape shall be put in the cachot for ten days and shall lose his turn of exchange, and any prisoner who shall be retaken after having escaped from the prison, and shall by this means have occasioned expenses, shall not only lose his turn of exchange and be put in the cachot, but shall, with the whole of the prisoners kept in the same room from which he has escaped, be reduced to two-thirds of their ration until by such deduction the expenses shall be made good ; and even if he shall not be retaken, the whole of the prisoners are in the same manner to reimburse such expense.

VII. A market is allowed to be held in each prison from nine o'clock in the morning till twelve on every day except Sunday, that such prisoners as have the means may be enabled to purchase such articles or clothes as they may wish for, and the Agent and officers will take care that the prisoners are not imposed upon in the prices, but the prisoners are forbidden to buy or to introduce into the prison liquors, knives or weapons of any kind under pain of being confined in the cachot for ten days for each offence.

VIII. The prisoners are allowed during market hours to sell articles of their own manufacture, except mittens or woollen gloves, straw hats or bonnets, shoes, plaited straw, obscene pictures or images and

articles formed out of the prison stores, which are all strictly forbidden, and any prisoner making or selling any of these forbidden articles, or found to have any of such articles in his possession, shall be confined to the cachot and reduced to two-thirds rations for three days, and such prohibited articles as are found shall be destroyed.

IX. Each prisoner shall receive a ticket from the Agent specifying the different articles which have been delivered to him, and on failure of producing this ticket when asked for it by the Agent, he shall be confined in the cachot and reduced to two-thirds rations for three days.

X. If any prisoner shall steal, deliberately and designedly damage, or buy, sell, or otherwise make away with the coverlets, hammocks, or other articles of bedding, or other articles belonging to the prison, all the prisoners in the same room shall be reduced to two-thirds of their ration until by such reduction the damaged or lost articles be replaced, and the offenders shall lose their turn of exchange.

XI. Any prisoner who shall have bought, sold or disposed of his ration by gambling or otherwise, or shall have sold or made away with any article of clothing, even though such article belong to him, he shall be confined in the cachot and shall receive only two-thirds of his ration during such time as the Agent shall direct, and he shall lose his turn of exchange.

XII. Any prisoner who shall offer, or propose to buy the turn of exchange of a fellow-prisoner, or shall sell or propose to sell his turn of exchange under any consideration or in any way whatever,

shall infallibly lose his turn of exchange, and in all cases the buyer and seller shall be considered equally culpable.

XIII. All letters sent by prisoners, or addressed to them, must pass through the Agent's hands for the purpose of being examined by him, and if any attempts are made to send letters through any other channel, such letters, being discovered, shall be destroyed, and the writers of them, as well as such prisoners as attempted to pass them out of the prison, shall be punished in such a way as the Agent shall direct.

XIV. In each prison the prisoners are to name three or five from among them to examine the provisions furnished by the contractor for the purpose of giving their opinion whether the articles are good, and whether they have their regular allowance conformably with the undermentioned table of rations, with a surplus of 5 lbs. for each cwt. of beef, and 2 lbs. for each cwt. of bread each day, and if it shall appear to the prisoners appointed for this purpose that there is any cause of complaint with regard to the said provisions, or in any other case whatsoever, they are respectfully to inform the Agent, who will remedy it if the complaint is well founded.

XV. The prisoners will receive their rations in messes of six men each, and every mess is to name a chief who shall be responsible for the bowl, the wooden dish, the can, and the pot and spoons furnished to each mess, and he is also required to be present when the rations of each mess are given out.

XVI. If it is found that any prisoner has escaped and that the others belonging to the same mess have nevertheless received the same rations without having informed the Agent or one of the clerks or turnkeys of the escape of such prisoner, all the other prisoners belonging to the same mess shall be reduced to two-thirds allowance for the space of ten days.

XVII. A certain number of prisoners are to be nominated by the Agent as inspectors for the preservation of good order and to see that the established regulations of the prison are attended to, and at the same time to inform the Agent if any of the prisoners shall misbehave.

XVIII. Some of the prisoners shall be employed in the capacity of barbers to shave the prisoners, and it is particularly recommended to the prisoners to pay every possible attention to personal cleanliness, as this is of the greatest importance for the preservation of their health.

From these regulations it will be seen that the only machinery for enforcing obedience was the cachot. The prisons themselves were not comfortable places to live in ; to compete against them the cachot had to be avowedly uncomfortable. Throughout 1809 and 1810 the cachot was a mere black hole, a tiny building of rough masonry in the infirmary yard. It was far too small for the numbers who incurred confinement in it, and it was not secure. Early in 1811 Mr. Walters, the foreman of works, set a number of French prisoners to work to build

their own cage on the site of the present carpenters' shop. Huge stones weighing a ton each were carted to the spot to form the floor ; the walls and the vaulted roof were made of dressed granite. When finished it measured 20 feet square inside. The only windows were two openings under the eaves 6 inches by 4. The door was iron plated on both sides with a wicket 8 inches square, through which the rations could be passed. It had no furniture of any kind, not even straw to lie upon, except when the four unfortunate Americans were made to spend six months in it. When we consider that some of the men confined in the cachot were practically naked, and that they lay on the granite floor in the dark for ten days of a Dartmoor winter, we are not surprised to learn that some of them were removed to the hospital to die.

## CHAPTER IV

IN February, 1813, there were on parole in England 2,202 French commissioned officers and 1,260 prisoners of inferior rank. The subsistence allowance of the former was 1*s.* 6*d.* a day and of the latter 1*s.* 3*d.* Complaints of the insufficiency of the smaller allowance were so frequent, that on February 8th, 1813, M. Rivière, of the French Admiralty, addressed a long letter to the Transport Board pointing out that, though the allowance was actually larger than that granted to English prisoners of the same rank in France, it was in reality smaller on account of the higher cost of living in England. The letter contains a very interesting comparative table of the cost of provisions in the two countries. The Transport Board treated this communication with more courtesy than might have been expected, seeing that in October, 1804, M. Rivière had denied the right of our Government to inquire into the treatment of English prisoners in France, adding that "it was the will of the Emperor" and that generosity and the Law of Nations alike demanded that prisoners should not be deprived of what was



necessary to life. The Board called upon Lieutenant Wallis, who had lately escaped from France, to check each item in the market prices of provisions in France, and arrived at the following comparison :—

An English gentleman in France will require daily		A French gentleman in Eng- land will require daily	
	<i>s. d.</i>		<i>s. d.</i>
1 lb. bread . . . .	0 2	$\frac{1}{3}$ quartern loaf . . . .	0 5
1 lb. beef . . . .	0 4	$\frac{3}{4}$ lb. beef, 10d. lb. at least. . . . .	0 7 $\frac{1}{2}$
$\frac{3}{4}$ of beer. (This mea- sure is not known) . .	0 1	2 quarts of beer . . . .	0 6
Beer, very bad, is 3d. a bottle, wine 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d., say they are taken alter- nately, a bottle a day.	0 5 $\frac{1}{4}$	A pot of porter . . . .	0 5
Vegetables and fruit. .	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	Vegetables, including apples . . . . .	0 2
(Vegetables are very cheap.)		Cooking . . . . .	0 2
Milk . . . . .	0 $\frac{1}{2}$	(At least 2d.)	
Expense of cooking . .	0 1	Milk . . . . .	0 2
Wood at Verdun very dear, 36 livres a cord, per day probably . .	0 2		
<hr/>			
1 day's subsistence in France . . . . .	0 9	1 day's subsistence in England according to M. Rivière's infor- mation . . . . .	2 0
Do. according to Lieut. Wallis . . . . .	1 5 $\frac{1}{2}$		
Average . . . .	1 1 $\frac{1}{4}$	More probably . . . .	2 0 $\frac{1}{2}$

From this it appears that in England living was twice as dear, and that the least that a man could live on was 2s. in England and 1s. in France.

The French Government had a scale of daily allowance varying from 7s. a day for a General or

Admiral to 10*d.* for officers of the merchant service. To double the French allowance would have involved an increased expenditure of £43,323. After much correspondence the Transport Board adopted a scale varying from 2*s.* for the higher ranks to 1*s.* 8*d.* in the lower at an increased cost of £28,000 a year.

Forfeitures of parole were continually adding to the number of officers confined in the prison. Naval and military officers, commanders and first lieutenants of privateers mounting fourteen guns, commanders and first mates of merchantmen and non-combatants were admitted to parole at Ashburton, Okehampton, and other places, where their descriptions were carefully taken, and a daily subsistence allowance of 1*s.* 6*d.* was paid to them. They were allowed to walk one mile along the turnpike road in either direction provided that they retired to their lodgings at an early hour every evening, and their general conduct was inoffensive. Twice a week they were required to answer to their names at roll call, and if they failed in this or left their place of parole without leave they were arrested and sent to the prison. The daily subsistence allowance was obviously inadequate, and the French Government demanded an increase more than once. But this could hardly be held an excuse for the frequent breaches of parole which brought dishonour upon the French nation. If the money was forthcoming, a native could always be bribed to act as guide to the

coast, for neither did honour restrain the prisoner nor patriotism the man of Devon. Sometimes, but not very often, the adventure miscarried, for the reward paid by the Government for recapture tempted other natives to pursuit. At the Devon Assize in March, 1811, nine prisoners were convicted of breach of parole, and one Ralph Mills was indicted for aiding two others to escape.

On October 29th, 1811, under the guidance of a man named Johns, six French officers, living on parole at Okehampton, left the town and crossed the moor to Bovey Tracy. Here they met a woman and asked her whether there was a road to Torbay which avoided the town. When she replied in the negative they halted for consultation, and she gave the alarm in the village. The villagers turned out, and captured three, but the others took to their heels, hotly pursued. When they saw that their pursuers were gaining on them Johns, the guide, turned and stabbed the foremost, one Christopher Snell, to the heart with a dagger, and they escaped. The Transport Board circulated bills offering a reward for the arrest of the murderer, but he was never caught.

The escapes of paroled officers from Wincanton had become so great a scandal that on December 11th, 1811, all the paroled prisoners were mustered and marched to London under an escort of dragoons for removal to Scotland. Culliford, the ringleader of the fishermen and smugglers who got their living by

arranging escapes, was tried and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

The French Government felt the frequency of breaches of parole as a stigma on the nation, for on August 9th, 1812, there appeared in the *Moniteur* an article which attempted to justify them with the most transparent sophistry. It alleged that the French had surrendered on the condition of retaining their arms, and as the British had broken this article of capitulation their parole was not binding, and further, that as they had been taken in a Spanish war they were bound by the custom of the Spaniards, who always broke their parole when it suited them.

The first escape from the prison took place five days after the first draft arrived. Sevegran, a naval surgeon, and Auvray, a naval officer, having observed that a guard of fifty men marched into the prison every evening to assist in getting the prisoners into their respective halls if required, made themselves glengarries and overcoats, and strips of tin looking like bayonets at a distance, and fell in at the rear of the detachment as it marched out. Favoured by the rain which was falling heavily at the time they passed all the gates unquestioned, and as the company wheeled towards the barracks, they left it, and went on through the village towards Plymouth. Speaking English fluently and being well provided with money, they had no difficulty in booking seats for London on the coach. In order to give them time two of their

friends had agreed that at the count out next morning they should contrive to be the last to leave the prison. At the door they fell into a mock quarrel. Words ran high ; the turnkey called two soldiers to help in keeping the peace ; a crowd collected in expectation of a fight. With many a "goddem" the turnkey threatened them with the cachot, and in the disturbance, as was intended, he lost count. "No matter," said one of the prisoners, "the count out is a farce : no one could escape from this place without a balloon" ; and the turnkey agreed, saying that it was the strongest prison in the world. The very next night the two conspirators, Kermel and Vasselin by name, with a third man, Cherabeau, attired in a like disguise, practised the same fraud. All went well until the third gate was reached, when the gate-keeper asked them whether the locking up was finished. Receiving no reply, he called after them insultingly, "All these lobsters are deaf with their caps pulled down over their ears." They too got safe to London.

But the easiest method of escape was by bribing the sentries. The prisoner would get into conversation with one of them in the yard, and open negotiations with a promise of from one to two pounds, which was the market rate for this service. Out of the reward the sentry had to bribe two or three other soldiers, and then wait until they were posted on a dark night in such a way as to maintain a connection between them, when a prearranged

signal was made to the prisoner. He then climbed to one of the skylights in the cock-loft, which were not secured with gratings, and, breaking through it, let himself down with a rope. The rope was untied by a confederate, and the end thrown up to the sentry on the wall, who pulled him up and passed him on to a fellow-conspirator until he was clear of the cordon. Sometimes a soldier, dissatisfied with his share of the bribe, would secretly give information to the officer of the guard, and his post would be filled by another sentry, who guarded the runaway to the guard-house instead of to the open moor.

On a dark night in February, 1811, three privates in the Nottinghamshire Militia, named Keeling, Smith, and Marshall, were heavily bribed to assist two French officers to escape in this way. A fourth soldier who was in the conspiracy, but did not consider himself fairly treated in the division, gave information, and a picket was in waiting for the prisoners as they descended the wall. Keeling had furnished them with a pistol to be used to intimidate the country people in case of pursuit, but the prisoners used it against the picket, fortunately without doing any injury. On February 28th the three soldiers were tried at Frankfort barracks in Plymouth by court martial, and sentenced to receive 900 lashes each. Smith and Marshall were pardoned, but Keeling, who had furnished the prisoners with firearms, actually received

450 lashes in the presence of pickets from every regiment in the garrison.

At the March assize at Exeter, in 1812, a civilian named Edward Palmer, who had been guilty of providing a disguise for a prisoner named Bellaird, was fined £5, and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment.

On a dark night early in 1812, three prisoners escaped with the connivance of a private in the Roscommon Militia named Lynch. They had agreed to pay the bribe in Bank of England notes on the wall, but when the moment came they placed in his hands counterfeit notes forged by a man named F. Lustique, who carried on the trade of a forger of notes in No. 5 prison, and always had specimens on sale. Not suspecting the cheat practised on him, Lynch tried to pass the notes, and was arrested for uttering the forgeries. Rather than divulge the manner in which he came into possession of the counterfeits he chose to take his trial at the Devon assize, and on March 12th he was convicted and sentenced. Captain Cotgrave meanwhile had succeeded in tracing the forgeries to Lustique in time to have him tried at the same assize, and he and his victim Lynch suffered together.

The most famous escape was that of Louis François Vanhille. It is given in great detail in the official records on account of the light it sheds upon the manner in which the country people assisted in the

escape of prisoners, and it created sufficient stir in Devonshire to become the basis of a myth that a French General was confined in the cottage at Okery Bridge.

On May 2nd, 1806, H.M.SS. *Barfleur* and *Druid* captured the French corvette *Le Pandour*, of which Vanhille was Commissary (Purser). He was born at Dunkirk on March 6th, 1780, and was therefore twenty-six years old. He is described as a stoutly built man of 5 feet 5 inches, with light brown hair, grey eyes, and fresh complexion, pitted with smallpox. He spoke English remarkably well, and had the appearance of an Englishman. He spent a week in Mill prison at Plymouth, and was then removed on parole to Launceston, where he lodged with John Tyeth, a brewer in Back Lane. Tyeth was a Non-conformist, and had five daughters, two of whom were married to local preachers in Cornwall. Vanhille lost no time in laying siege to the heart of Tyeth's youngest daughter Fanny, to whom he was supposed to be engaged. He was intimate with a French surgeon named Deronge, a fellow lodger with Mr. Tyeth, and they gradually got into the habit of wandering beyond the limits allowed to parole prisoners. Spetigue, the Agent at Launceston, seems to have been very lax in this respect, for the prisoners were to be seen at shooting parties in the neighbourhood, at Tavistock, and even at the Bodmin races. Unfortunately for Vanhille, the niece of Digory



Bray, an auctioneer at Launceston, gave birth to a child which was "sworn upon" Dr. Deronge. The overseer of the parish obtained judgment against him for £25, and, being unable to pay, he resisted the claim until Vanhille came to his assistance. This led to an inquiry into their movements, and as soon as the money was paid Mr. Spetigue detained them both on a charge of having broken their parole by going without leave to dine with Alderman Maby, of Camelford. Their parole was forfeited, and on December 12th, 1811, they were sent under arrest to Dartmoor prison. Vanhille at once became one of the leading men of the Petit Cautionnement, and we find him signing documents as a member of the committee of prisoners. On August 22nd, 1812, he failed to answer to his name, and it soon became known that he had escaped by collusion with some one outside the prison. On February 4th, 1813, the ship *Jane* from Bristol dropped anchor in Montego Bay, Jamaica. The boarding officer reported to the magistrates that among the passengers was a mysterious person named Williams, who was unable to give a good account of his business. He was arrested as a spy, his papers were seized, and after a long examination he admitted that he was Vanhille, that he had escaped from Dartmoor, and that he intended to make his way to New Orleans, where he had a brother in a very good position. Vanhille had one weakness: his early training had taught him too much method

in his arrangement of papers, and he carried about with him a complete dossier of his movements, beginning with his birth certificate and ending with a map of England, on which all his wanderings were traced. He carried besides letters of credit signed by correspondents in England, and it was hoped by impounding these to discover the manner in which escapes from Dartmoor were effected by collusion with treasonable Englishmen. He was sent back to England in a frigate, and lodged in the *Crown Prince* hulk at Chatham on June 22nd, 1813.

The Transport Board lost no time in acting on the information contained in his papers. Messrs. Eastlake, solicitors, of Plymouth, to whom the papers were sent, discovered a drunken exciseman named Beale, who had known Vanhille and Deronge at Launceston, and through his efforts as a private inquiry agent the whole plot came to light. Beale's story soon received unexpected corroboration through a letter clandestinely written by Vanhille from Chatham Prison to a Miss Penwarden, of Tavistock, for delivery to Deronge, which Captain Cotgrave intercepted, and Deronge was removed to the prison ship *Firm* in the Hamoaze. Both Vanhille and Deronge had endeared themselves to old Tyeth, the Nonconformist brewer, by pretending to be converted. What it must have cost the two gay Frenchmen to carry out this fraud can only be judged by the text of a letter of Tyeth, who might

have sat for the portrait of Chadband. The chief actors in the plot were Tyeth, his two daughters, who were postmistresses of Launceston, John Rowe, a tailor, Mrs. Miller, a regrater—that is, a person who bought poultry and other produce for sale in the Plymouth market,—Digory Penwarden, the Tavistock ironmonger, and Mary Ellis, a Tavistock girl who kept a donkey, and visited the prison market twice a week. Vanhille, as appears from an early plan of the prison, was allowed some measure of liberty in that he had permission to take a daily walk through the gate and for two hundred yards up the Tavistock road, and thus he was able to communicate with the Tyeths through the country people. On August 7th, Mary Ellis brought with her the rusty top hat, smock, worsted stockings, and heavy boots worn by the waggoners of Devon. Vanhille mingled with the crowd buying in the market, and under cover of the woman's skirt contrived to don the garments unobserved by the sentries. Imitating the countryman's slouch he passed out with a mob of other merchants when the bell rang for closing the market. One would have supposed that a prisoner set at liberty in an enemy's country would have made at once for the coast. That Vanhille did not do so proves to what remarkable lengths sympathy with the French prisoners had gone in the neighbourhood of the parole towns. On the day of his escape he tramped through Tavistock

to Launceston, where he slept with his old friends the Tyeths. The next day he set out for Camelford and met Alderman Mabyn in the road, who, seeing him in a waggoner's disguise, and suspecting that he had made his escape, said, "Mr. Vanhille, as a friend I should be happy to see you, but in the present case you cannot harbour under my roof," and Vanhille tramped on to St. Colomb. The next day he passed over the ferry at Padstow and slept at St. Teath, and then, despairing of finding a vessel bound for a foreign port, he took advantage of a stage waggon returning to Launceston, and spent two days in hiding with the Tyeths, passing the nights at St. Stephen's Rectory with Tyeth's brother, who was rector. Being now furnished with funds by the Tyeths he set out for Bideford, and after four days he took passage in a vessel bound for Newport and Abergavenny, but he returned in the same ship to Appledore, and on September 8th he was back in Launceston again. The object of these aimless wanderings was to evade pursuit until he was forgotten. On September 9th he set out on foot for London, passing through Okehampton, Exeter and Salisbury, where he took the coach, but he spent only two days in London, for on the 15th he set out for Petersfield by way of Guildford. From Petersfield he returned to Salisbury *via* Winchester, and on the 20th he reached Bristol, where he embarked in the *New Passage* for Usk and Abergavenny. The same

vessel brought him back, and he then returned to Launceston, and spent a week with the Tyeths. He had thus visited most of the parole towns in the South of England. Everyone in the town, except the Government officials, knew that he was there, but no one thought of giving information against him. On October 5th he walked to Falmouth, carrying credentials forged by Tyeth for production in case he was stopped, and here he lodged for two nights at the "Blue Anchor," but he could find no vessel bound for America. On the 10th he visited Launceston for the last time. Liberally furnished with funds, with a Bible and much good advice, he said farewell to his sweetheart, Fanny Tyeth, and departed for Bristol, where after three weeks of waiting he engaged a passage for Jamaica on the ship *Jane*. Tempestuous weather delayed them; they reached Cork two days late for the convoy, and were obliged to wait until the 19th December for the next convoy of eighty vessels bound for the West Indies. The delay enabled Vanhille to communicate with Tyeth, who sent him a long letter full of scriptural quotations, which, by collusion with his daughters, the postmistresses, was passed through the post office unstamped, and, what was more to Vanhille's purpose, a box of clothing. Tyeth's letters were written in a disguised hand and signed "J. and A. Johnson" and "G. M. Thompson," a fact which sorely puzzled the investigating officers. Vanhille

was also furnished with forged letters of introduction from several persons well-known in the West, and with a letter of credit upon J. W. Frankland in Jamaica signed "Nhoj Ewor," which is "John Rowe" written backwards. Frankland, as was afterwards discovered, was a Naval surgeon, who, while on half-pay at Launceston, had run up a bill with his tailor, Rowe, and the latter, seeing no other way of getting his money, made a present of the debt to Vanhille. In a little over two months Vanhille had travelled 1230 miles, for the most part on foot. So perfect was his pronunciation of English that in spite of the intimacy into which persons are thrown on a long sea voyage, the nationality of "Mr. Williams" had never been called in question by any of his mess-mates on board the *Jane*. If it had not been for his passion for hoarding papers he would undoubtedly have reached his brother in New Orleans, for he had £15 in bank notes in his pocket besides the letter of credit to Frankland. On his removal to the *Crown Prince* prison hulk at Chatham he was offered his release on condition that he would give full information about his escape, but he declared that he would sooner die than betray those who had befriended him, and he remained a prisoner until the cartel for Calais on the 19th May, 1814.

The Government inquiry established the fact that Launceston was more French in its sympathies than

English. Samuel Smith, a mason, is described as "a very disaffected old fellow, very much attached to the French and to their principles." He had learned French in a French prison, and he generally had prisoners lodging with him. His son acted as guide to Vanhille in his wanderings in Cornwall. The case of Digory Penwarden, currier, saddler, harness maker and ironmonger of Tavistock, was even more remarkable. It was he who had provided the waggoner's disguise for Vanhille, and his wife was "in a state of insensibility by being over-studious in the French language." His two daughters had survived this ordeal, and besides making frequent visits to Dartmoor, they received letters from Vanhille from Chatham and conveyed them to Deronge on board the *Firm* hulk in the Hamoaze. Tyeth, the brewer, to do him justice, had not imbibed any principles from the French. He was concerned only with winning their souls to his peculiar brand of nonconformity, and he may be allowed some latitude as the prospective father-in-law of one of his converts. John Rowe's sympathies were for his customers. He frankly admitted his signature to the letter of credit, the only document of which the authorship could be legally proved, and we are glad to know that an Exeter jury acquitted him of aiding Vanhille to escape, since it was evident that he played a very minor part. Tyeth's brother, the rector of St.

Stephen's, near Launceston, seems to have given Vanhille lodgings for the night, but this could not be proved against him. From the official point of view the position is summed up by Beale in these words : " I find nothing more to be done among the Launcestonians, as they are all hung together in knavery."



## CHAPTER V

### THE ROMANS

THERE were well-defined grades of society among the prisoners. The first, called "Les Lords," consisted of men of good family who were drawing on their bankers or receiving regular remittances from home ; "Les Labourers" were those who added to their rations by the manufacture of articles for sale in the market. "Les Indifferents" did nothing but lounge about the yards, and had to content themselves with the Government rations. "Les Minables" were the gamblers and hatchers of mischief. The fifth grade is so remarkable that it deserves a chapter to itself. It was also composed of habitual gamblers, nicknamed ironically "Les Kaiserlics" by the other prisoners, but generally known by the title chosen by themselves, "Les Romains," because the cockloft, to which they were banished in each prison, was called "Le Capitole." The cocklofts had been intended by the architect for promenade in wet weather, but they had soon to be put to this baser use.

To the sociologist there can be nothing more

significant than the fact that a body of civilised men, some of them well-educated, will under certain circumstances adopt a savage and bestial mode of life, not as a relapse, but as an organised proceeding for the gratification of their appetites and as a revolt against the trammels of social law. The evolution of the Romans was natural enough. The gambling fever seized upon the entire prison, and the losers having nothing but their clothes and bedding to stake, turned these into money and lost them. Unable to obtain other garments, and feeling themselves shunned by their former companions, they betook themselves to the society of men as unfortunate as themselves, and went to live in the cockloft because no one who lived in the more desirable floors cared to have them as neighbours. As they grew in numbers they began to feel a pride in their isolation and to persuade themselves that they had come to it by their own choice. In imitation of the floors below, where a "Commissaire" was chosen by public election and implicitly obeyed, they elected some genial, devil-may-care rascal to be their "General," who only held office because he never attempted to enforce his authority in the interests of decency and order. At the end of the first six months the number of admitted Romans was 250, and in the later years it exceeded 500, though the number was always fluctuating. In order to qualify for the order it was necessary to consent to the sale of every remaining garment and

article of bedding to purchase tobacco for the use of the community. The communism was complete. Among the whole five hundred there was no kind of private property, except a few filthy rags donned as a concession to social prejudice. A few old blankets held in common, with a hole in the middle for the head like a poncho, were used by those whose business took them into the yards. In the Capitole itself everyone lived in a state of nudity and slept naked on the concrete floor, for the only hammock allowed was that of the "General," who slept in the middle and allocated the lairs of his constituents. To this end a rough sort of discipline was maintained, for whereas 500 men could sleep without much discomfort on a single floor in three tiers of hammocks, the actual floor space was insufficient for more than a third of that number of human bodies lying side by side. At night, therefore, the Capitole must have been an extraordinary spectacle. The floor was carpeted with nude bodies, all lying on the same side, so closely packed that it was impossible to get a foot between them. At nightfall the General shouted "Fall in," and the men ranged themselves in two lines facing one another. At a second word of command alternate files took two paces to the front and rear and closed inward, and at the word "Bas" they all lay down on their right sides. At intervals during the night the General would cry "Pare a viser" (Attention!), "A Dieu, Va!" and they would all turn over.

From morning till night groups of Romans were to be seen raking the garbage heaps for scraps of offal, potato peelings, rotten turnips, and fish heads, for though they drew their ration of soup at mid-day, they were always famishing, partly because the ration itself was insufficient, partly because they exchanged their rations with the infamous provision-buyers for tobacco with which they gambled. Pride was certainly not a failing of which they could be accused. In the alleys between the tiers of hammocks on the floors below you might always see some of them lurking. If a man were peeling a potato a dozen of these wretches would be round him in a moment to beg for the peel; they would form a ring round every mess bucket, like hungry dogs, watching the eaters in the hope that one would throw away a morsel of gristle, and fighting over every bone. Sometimes the continual state of starvation and cold did its work and the poor wretch was carried to the hospital to die, but generally the bodies of the Romans acquired a toughened fibre which seemed immune from epidemic disease. Very soon after the occupation of the prison the Romans had received their nickname and had been expelled from the society of decent men, for we find that on August 15th, 1809, five hundred Romans received permission to pay a sort of state visit to No. 6 prison. At the head of the procession marched their "General," clad in a flash uniform made of blankets embroidered with straw, which looked like

gold lace at a distance. Behind him capered the band—twenty grotesque vagabonds blowing flageolets and trumpets, and beating iron kettles and platters. The ragged battalion marched in column of fours along the grass between the grille and the boundary wall without a rag on any of them but a breech clout, and they would have kept their absurd gravity till the end had not a rat chanced to run out of the cook-house. This was too much for them : breaking rank they chased it back into the kitchen, and the most nimble caught it, and after scuffling for it with a neighbour, tore it to pieces with his teeth and ate it raw. The rest, with whetted appetites, fell upon the loaves and looted them. The guard was called out, and the soldiers marched into the mêlée with fixed bayonets, but were immediately surrounded by the naked mob, disarmed with shouts of laughter, and marched off as prisoners towards the main gate amid cries of "*Vive l'Empereur !*" Here they were met by Captain Cotgrave hurrying to the rescue at the head of a strong detachment. The "General" of the Romans halted his men and made a mock heroic speech to the agent. "Sir," he said, striking a theatrical attitude, "we were directing our steps to your house to hand over to your care our prisoners and their arms. This is only a little incidental joke as far as your heroic soldiers are concerned who are now as docile as sheep. We now beg you to order double rations to be issued as a reward for our gallantry, and also to make

good the breach which we have just made in the provisions of our honourable hosts." Captain Cotgrave struggled with his gravity during this harangue, but the "General" had nevertheless to spend eight days in the cachot for his escapade, while his naked followers were driven back to their quarters with blows from the flat of the muskets. For a long time after this the life of the soldiers was made miserable with banter, and they would bring their bayonets down to the charge whenever a prisoner feigned to approach them.

Strange as it may seem there were among the Romans a number of young men of good family who were receiving regular remittances from their friends in France. When the quarterly remittance arrived the young man would borrow a suit of clothes, in which to fetch the money from the Agent's office, and, having handed over £1 to the "General" to be spent in tobacco or potatoes for the community, would take his leave, buy clothes, and settle down in one of the other floors as a civilised being. But a fortnight later the twenty-five Louis would have melted away at the gaming tables, clothes and bedding followed, and the prodigal would slink back to his old associates, who received him with a boisterous welcome. During the brief intervals when he was clothed and in his right mind many efforts were made by the decent prisoners to restrain him from ruin, but either the gambling fever or a natural distaste for restraint always proved too strong, and

no instance of permanent reclamation in the prison is recorded. It was otherwise when the Romans were restored to liberty. One would think that such creatures—half ape and half hog—had finally cut themselves off from civilised society, and that they ended their lives in the slums and stews of Paris. That this was not the case is the strangest part of this social phenomenon. In the year 1829 an officer who had been in Dartmoor on forfeiture of parole, attended mass in a village in Picardy, through which he happened to be passing. The curé preached an eloquent and spiritual sermon, a little above the heads of his rural congregation. One of his auditors was strangely moved, not by the matter of the sermon, but by vague reminiscences, gradually growing clearer, evoked by the features and gestures of the preacher. So certain did he feel that he had last seen this suave and reverend priest raking an offal heap in the garb of Adam that he knocked at the sacristy door after the service. The curé received him formally with the “to-what-do-I-owe-the-honour” manner. “Were you not once a prisoner at the depot at Dartmoor?” The priest flushed to his tonsure and stammered, but at last faltered an affirmative, adding sadly that imprisonment was very harmful both to body and soul.

“Do you remember me?” the officer asked.

“Of course I do. It was you who so often preached good morals to me. It is a long time ago

and, as you see, God has worked a miracle in my soul. Evil example and a kind of fatal attraction towards vice dragged me down : I was young then. But do not let us talk of that horrible time, which I look upon as an incurable wound in my life." An invitation to dinner followed the interview, and the visitor noticed that his host was no anchorite in the matter of food and drink. As he warmed with wine he became more confidential, and even a little scandalous, though he took occasion more than once to remind his guest that if in his youth his life had been shameful, at least he had the consolation of remembering that it was never criminal. Nevertheless, in the later stages of the repast, there seemed to be a faint afterglow of the volcanic eruption of his youth when he lived in the "Capitole." This man had been one of those who had received regular remittances from his friends in France, and who, after a brief orgy at the gaming-tables, had rooted his way back to the swine-pen in the cock-loft. His parishioners affirmed him to be a man of great piety and open-handed charity. They knew nothing of his past, and his guest was careful to respect his secret.

In August, 1846, one of the highest administrative posts under Louis Philippe was filled by a man of great ability, one of those officials who are selected by the Press for flattering eulogium. Yet he, too, had been a Roman, and there must have been many in France who knew that the breast then plastered



with decorations had once been bare to the icy winds of Dartmoor.

In 1844 there was in Paris a merchant who had amassed a large fortune in trade. His little circle of vulgar plutocrats was wearied with the stories of his war service, and the leading part he had taken in the internal affairs of the war prison at Dartmoor. He seemed quite to have forgotten that the "leading part" was an unerring nose for fish offal in the garbage heap, wherein he excelled all the other naked inmates of the "Capitole."

As they grew in numbers, from being objects of commiseration, the Romans became to be a terror to the community. Theft, pillage, stabbings and the darkest forms of vice were practised among them almost openly. Unwashed and swarming with vermin they stalked from prison to prison begging, scavenging, quarrelling, pilfering from the provision carts, throwing stones at any that interfered with them.

It was this formidable body whose condition so shocked the Americans on their first arrival. They were the analogues of the "Rough Alleys" in the American prison, but they were more bestial and less aggressive.

As it is not mentioned in the official records, let us hope that one horrible story, told by a French prisoner, is untrue. He says that when the bake-house was burned down on October 8th, 1812, and

the prisoners refused to accept the bread sent in by the contractor, the whole prison went without food for twenty-four hours. The starving Romans fell upon the offal heaps as usual, and when the two-horse waggon came in to remove the filth they resented the removal of their larder. In the course of the dispute, partly to revenge themselves upon the driver, partly to appease their famishing bloodthirst, these wretches fell upon the horses with knives, stabbed them to death, and fastened their teeth in the bleeding carcasses. This horror was too much for the stomachs of the other prisoners, who helped to drive them off.

Occasionally the administration made an attempt to clothe them. In April, 1813, fourteen who were entitled to a fresh issue were caught, scrubbed from head to foot in the bath-house, deprived of their filthy rags, and properly clothed, but on the very next day they had sold every garment, and were again seen in the yards with nothing to cover their nakedness but the threadbare blanket common to the tenants of the "Capitole." In 1812 they were banished to No. 4 prison, and in order to keep them from annoying their fellow prisoners the walls were built which separated No. 4 and its yard from the rest of the prison, for it was hoped that where all were destitute those who would sell their clothing, bedding and provisions would be unable to find a purchaser. But though new hammocks and clothing were given to

them by charitable French prisoners, as well as by the Government, they disposed of them all through the bars of the gate and went naked as before.

Unquestionably the greatest evil which Captain Cotgrave was called upon to face was the sale of rations. Serious crime could safely be left to the prisoners themselves to punish, but this inhuman traffic was the business of nobody but the persons who indulged in it.

Every prisoner was served with rations every day, but if he chose to sell them instead of eating them it was very difficult to interfere. Certain prisoners set up shops where they bought the rations of the improvident and sold them again at a profit. Gambling, of course, was at the bottom of the evil. To get a penny or two to stake at the tables, men who had sold all their clothes would hypothecate their rations for several days, and, having lost, and knowing that to beg would be useless, they would sit down to starve, until, in the last stage of weakness, they were carried to the infirmary to die. Sometimes these miserable creatures would forestall the end by hanging themselves to a hammock stanchion rather than be forced out of their beds by the guards.

In February, 1813, very much to their surprise, Captain Cotgrave clapped a few of the most notorious food-buyers into the cachot, and kept them there for ten days on two-thirds allowance. To their remonstrances he replied as follows :—

“TO THE PRISONERS IN THE CACHOT FOR  
PURCHASING PROVISIONS.

“The orders to put you on short allowance from the Commissioners of His Majesty’s Transport Board is for purchasing the provisions of your fellow prisoners, by which means numbers have died for want of food, and the hospital is filled with sick not likely to recover. The number of deaths occasioned by this inhuman practice occasions considerable expense to the Government, not only in coffins, but the hospital filled with those poor unhappy wretches so far reduced from want of food that they linger a considerable time in the hospital at the Government’s expense, and then fall a victim to the cruelty of those who have purchased their provisions to the disgrace of Christians and whatever nation they belong to.

“The testimony of your countrymen and the surgeons prove the fact.”

But it was all to no purpose, and in the following month we find him appealing to the whole body of prisoners.

“NOTICE TO THE PRISONERS IN GENERAL.

“The infamous and horrible practice of a certain number of prisoners who buy the provisions of some evil-conducted and unfortunate of their fellow-countrymen, thereby tearing away from them the only means of existence they possess, forces me to forewarn the whole of the prisoners that on the first appearance of a recurrence of this odious and abominable practice I shall, without any exception, prevent any person

from keeping shops in the prison, and I will stop the market.

“As it would be entirely against my wishes and inclination to have recourse to these violent measures, I strongly request of the well-conducted of the prisoners to use all their exertions to put a stop thereto.”

The threat was an empty one ; the well-conducted prisoners discountenanced the practice, but the Romans bought and sold among themselves.

After their attack upon the American prisoners in July, 1813, which will be related hereafter, they were further isolated by being confined to the small yard on the south side of No. 4 (now the separate cells yard). For more than four years they had skulked about the yards by day, almost naked, exposed to the damp fogs of summer and the icy blasts of winter ; had huddled by night upon a wet and filthy stone floor ; had subsisted half-starved upon garbage until the wind seemed to blow through their skeleton ribs ; had neglected every elementary law of sanitation, and yet, strange to relate, every succeeding epidemic had passed them by, and it was notorious throughout the prison that sickness was almost unknown among the Romans. When General Stephenson and Mr. Hawker held their inquiry in 1813 the scandal of their mode of life was so great that the principal recommendation of the Commission was that “the prisoners calling themselves Romans”

should be removed and compelled to live like human beings in some place where they could be kept under strict surveillance. And so, on October 16th, 1813, the scarecrow battalion of 436 "Romans" was mustered at the gate, decently clothed, and marched under a strong escort to a prison hulk in Plymouth, and kept under strict discipline until the peace. Fit products of the Terror, these Romans, who as children may have hooted after the tumbrils in Paris, and shrieked with unholy glee as the boats went down in the Noyades under the quai at Nantes.

## CHAPTER VI

DURING the first four months of an exceptionally fine summer the inhabitants of the general prison had time to settle down. The money of those who enjoyed remittances circulated freely in the prison, and the enterprising opened booths for the sale of strange and wonderful dishes compounded of the Government rations with ingredients purchased in the market. The favourite was a ragoût, called "rata-touille," made of Government beef, potatoes and peas. Others hawked about the yards Government clothing bought from the Romans—the hideous suit of yellow kersey and the striped shirt with "Toto" stamped in black capitals across the back—and the provision-buyers made a profit out of their infamous traffic in the full knowledge that the sellers would starve. Gaming-tables were opened; there were classes for dancing and singing and fencing. The "laboureurs" earned money by plaiting straw bonnets and bracelets and watch-guards of hair; others worked in bone and in carving and rigging model ships which they sold in the market.

The scene in the yards at this period must have

been extraordinary. Let us climb in imagination to the side of the sentry on the wall nearest to the barracks. The five prisons lie below us in a semi-circle surrounded by a tall iron railing. They are empty, because all the 5,000 have come out into the yards to enjoy the rare sunshine. The crowd is unevenly distributed, at one point so dense that we cannot see the ground for the yellow dresses ; at another, whither men have moved for peace from the noise, it is sparser. Against the cross wall at our feet four men are playing at a sort of fives with a crowd of idle spectators, and just beyond in the lane between two lines of men they are flinging quoits. The knot of men glued to the iron railing in the middle of the prison are watching the market on the other side. The yellow-clad men moving among the potato bags are privileged to pass the gate, and are trying to beat down the market women from Moretonhampstead, though the price fixed by the Agent is marked in chalk on each bag. The scaffold-poles yonder mean that they are running up two new prisons on either side of the yard. The masons are all Frenchmen working for sixpence a day under the foreman of works. When these are finished the place will hold another two thousand men. The men we see in the vacant space beyond are the aristocrats ; you may know them by their clothing as well as by their gait, for they draw quarterly allowances from their friends in France, and, scorning to wear the



King's yellow, they are clad in black broadcloth got from the Jewish clothes dealers in the market, and there are even two who are swinging passable imitations of a gold-knobbed cane. That their cambric frills and ruffles are not all that they could wish may be gathered from the fluttering clothes-lines beyond, which almost hide the washermen who are pounding garments between stones on the margin of the watercourse beneath. The ground slopes quickly here, and the stream is fast ; for all that it has passed through the kitchen the water is clean enough to rinse the clothes before it vanishes through the grating. Bathing? No ; though the bathing pond is there, it has not been filled these two months, so chill has been the air, and the naked men who are loitering near it are Romans. The nearest washermen are keeping a sharp eye upon them lest they filch a shirt from the line. Look ! The two sentries are unlocking the gate and forcing back the crowd with their muskets to make room for the scavenger's waggon. Watch him as he reaches that heap of refuse. The ragged men who are poking it with sticks will not move, and he has to threaten them with the point of his fork with the good-humoured tone in which one drives off wallowing pigs, and they give way snarling. The row of men sitting with their backs against the wall of the building are artificers at work knitting and plaiting. The crowd surges to and fro within an inch of their feet, but

they do not look up, even when there is a rush, for rushes are frequent. Now the mass has shifted to the north side of the yard, the hindmost craning over the shoulders of the inner circle. It is a duel, though we cannot see it for the press. The fives-players would be there too if they knew it, but many things pass in this press of men unknown to persons at a distance of a dozen yards. Above the deep undertone of men's voices shrill sounds detach themselves—a discordant peal of laughter, the blare of a trumpet, the shout of the crier ; but the steady hum is never hushed by day ; the surging and melting away of the crowd of 5,000 men continues without ceasing, far more aimlessly, as it strikes the spectator, than the busy aimlessness of a wrecked ants' nest.

The sun is setting, and above the babel rises the insistent bray of a cow's horn. At the iron gate stands the head turnkey blowing harsh blasts. The din swells for a few seconds and then subsides, the edges of the crowd begin to melt, first into units, then into little groups, streaming slowly away to the open doors of each prison building. Through the yards go turnkeys in uniform, shouting "Turn in ! Turn in !" The washermen strip the clothes-lines and stagger away with their arms full ; the players pocket their ball, exchanging challenges for the morrow ; the artificers stretch their limbs and shamble off with their tools ; in five minutes it is dusk, and the turnkeys are rounding up the skulkers,

who snarl French obscenity at them. The masons—a privileged body—are the last to go in, and they pass the turnkey with a smile and a friendly salutation. The ponderous gates are clanged to, the bolts shot ; the lamplighter is going his rounds, the show is over. As we go down the steps every building is humming like a steam chest under pressure. The faint light of many candles glows from the square barred windows.

If we were to look inside we should find on every floor five hundred men packed into the space now allotted to forty. Two alleyways run from end to end, and on either side of them the hammocks are stretched taut from hooks let into a stout timber framing. There are three tiers, and so closely are they laid that the slightest movement of one hammock brings it into contact with its neighbour, and sends a sort of electric shock down the tier from end to end. If a rope in the topmost tier chances to break the occupant is shot head foremost on to the man below, and involves him as well as the ground tier man in the same disaster. The three extricate themselves laughing, though one or the other may have bruises and a sprained joint to nurse. But as yet it is not bedtime. The smoke of a hundred tallow candles and a dozen stoves where viands are cooking, the steam from five hundred human bodies thickens the air ; the din of conversation and of musical instruments is deafening ; but we distinguish

through it all the monotonous chant of the croupier issuing from the dense crowd about the gaming-tables. The air is suffocating—it will become more tainted as the night advances—let us get out.

Captain Cotgrave's well meant insistence on the rule that each building should be vacated and aired at least once a day was regarded as a great hardship by the prisoners. Whatever the weather, naked Romans and all, they were bundled into the yard. When they obstinately refused to leave their hammocks, whether the sickness they pleaded was genuine or not, soldiers were called in to prick them forth with the point of the bayonet, and many were actually wounded in this way. After every escape they were kept out in the yards for an hour while the identity of the missing man was being investigated.

As the winter approached the weather broke up, and the yards were trampled into mud several inches deep. On October 8th, 1809, the turnkey left one of the prisons unlocked through an oversight. Discovering this a party waited until after midnight and then stole out into the yard. The sentry on the wall challenged, and receiving no reply discharged his musket, which alarmed the guard. A volley was fired, and the prisoners ran back into the prison. Alarmed by the shots Captain Cotgrave entered the yard with fifty men to make a thorough search. As he was returning,

satisfied that all was secure, a soldier spied a man creeping along the wall. They fired at him and brought him down with a bullet through the head ; but when they came to turn him over they found to their horror that they had killed one of their own men. On the following morning the French prisoners carved a stone with a rough inscription and set it up on the spot where the tragedy occurred, but Captain Cotgrave had it removed the same day. It is needless to say that this fact finds no place in the official records.

In the autumn of 1812 the overcrowding and the neglect of ordinary personal cleanliness produced the natural result in a terrible outbreak of "gaol fever," otherwise known as typhus. The Infirmary proved inadequate, and there was no course open but to convert the "Petit Cautionnement" into a subsidiary hospital, and to distribute its inmates among the other prisons. The breaking up of its pleasant little society was a tragedy. They had to go where room could be found for them, and arriving as interlopers, they did not add to their popularity by spending their substance in buying old hammocks and sewing them together to form a screen, cutting off their sleeping places from the rest of the hall. Yet if there was ever justification for the pursuit of privacy they had it, for there was not a man among their new housemates who was not infested with vermin. Whenever the new-comers went into

the yard they had to elbow their way through the crowd, and they spent half an hour in searching their clothing. For a long time after this they could indulge in none of their old recreations, for how could dancing, acting, and music be carried on in a dense crowd of jeering and hostile critics? For a time life became insupportable, and their minds were occupied only with plans for escape.

The site of the market square is now covered with flower beds. In the early years, when the prisoners had but little money to spend, the commodities sold were principally potatoes and fish. As the purchasing powers of the prisoners increased, through the receipt of remittances from home, and, in the case of the Americans, prize money earned in British men-o'-war, sugar, tea, coffee, tobacco and clothing were brought up by Jew hawkers from Plymouth. Farm produce was furnished by the small farmers about Moretonhampstead, Roborough and Tavistock, and was brought to market by their women, who travelled mounted on donkeys, driving ten or fifteen pack animals before them in single file with laden panniers. They would always time their departure from Princetown so as to clear the pixie-haunted moor before dark, and from the upper windows of the prison one might watch them winding the distant mule tracks sinuously like torpid snakes. The Agent fixed the market price by the rates ruling in Tavistock. Every bag was weighed at the second

gate by the market clerk, and the price was clearly marked in chalk before the hucksters could enter the market. Even if they arrived as late as six o'clock in the evening Captain Cotgrave would admit them rather than take the risk of discouraging them from coming again. As soon as they were ready to deal the sentry at the gate admitted the prisoners who were privileged to buy and sell on behalf of their fellows, and these entered the square laden with straw boxes, plaited hair ornaments, models in wood and bone, the productions of the "laboueurs," and after much chaffering returned with their arms full of provisions.

From 1814 onwards the market from before noon till nightfall was always crowded, and the scene was busy as well as picturesque. Most of the market-people had trestle tables on which they disposed their wares. Their donkeys were tied up to the railings in long rows. Provisions of every kind, clothing and utensils of crockery and metal were on sale in profusion, and thefts by the "Rough Alleys" were common. Nevertheless, there was a very friendly feeling between the market-people and the prisoners, who in their own interests did their best to protect the hucksters from the depredations of their ill-conditioned fellow-countrymen. The whole country-side felt the benefits of this easy market, and always took the side of their customers in any dispute with authority, for an embargo on the

market, which was resorted to by the Agent on one or two occasions as a general punishment for disorderly behaviour, was felt equally by both. But their sympathy with misfortune did not run the length of congratulations on the closing of the prison at the Peace, which, while it was a subject of public rejoicing throughout England, brought lean years to the farmers of Dartmoor.

The most famous of the market women was the fishwife, an old virago in fisherman's boots and jacket, a cast-off dragoon's forage cap without a peak and an unclipped beard. In her youth she had made the campaigns in India, had been kicked out of the army in Spain for her unblushing immoralities, and was here notorious as a brawling dealer in stale fish. She used to boast that she knew the Duke of Wellington "before he know'd a hawk from a hand-saw in a military way, for I put him in a way to be general, a real general." She also put Sodom and Gomorrah, the roughest of the Rough Alleys, in a way to be honest men on a famous occasion to be presently related.

The favourite of the market was pretty Agnes, who always turned out in a fancy trimmed apron and high pattens to keep her feet from the mud. Her beauty, her kindness, and confidential naïveté gave her a monopoly of the market as long as she had vegetables to sell, and there were always willing hands to carry her baskets to and from her donkeys



and to help her in displaying her wares. She received all their attentions with a delicious smile, and ended by marrying a drum-major of the garrison.

Pranks innumerable were played upon the German Jews who brought valuable consignments of cloth and other goods to the market, and disposed of them at a large profit, despite their ignorance of the English language. The Rough Alleys were their principal tormentors. They would come gravely into the market and talk imposingly about buying cloth for a suit of clothes, until they had allowed their victim to cut the bale into lengths, when they would stroll off and enjoy his outlandish profanity. Their favourite trick was to congregate at the gratings with a hook and line. One of their number, under the pretence of buying, would chaffer with a trader unversed in their ways—preferably a Jew—and secretly slip the hook into the fabric of a bale of cloth. Then while his attention was diverted the bale would slide off the table and begin rolling and pitching towards the grating. This was a joke, for the gratings were not wide enough to admit a bale of cloth, but the hook was often employed less innocently, and many a hat, a pair of shoes, or a bunch of radishes have leapt from their stall and shot across the yard into the crowd on the other side of the railing, where they were lost for ever. When the identity of the man who fixed the hook was

suspected he was not again allowed to pass the gate, but in a scene of so much stir he could seldom be identified. Practical jokes upon the Jew pedlars were not confined to the prisoners. On his way to the prison one of the Jews met a farmer belonging to Roborough alone on Peak Hill, and suspected from something in his manner that he was an American prisoner who had just escaped. His fingers itched to handle the three pounds which was the reward paid by the Government for the recapture of a prisoner. The farmer seized the humour of the situation and immediately began to sing Yankee Doodle, and submitted quietly to arrest ; but he declined to walk and insisted that a cart should be hired for half-a-guinea from Dousland Barn. As the cost would be more than covered by the reward his captor consented, and treated him liberally in the matter of refreshment. On arriving at the prison, to the Jew's discomfiture, the prisoner was immediately recognised by the turnkeys as a farmer who frequented the market, and instead of receiving the reward, the pedlar was obliged to pay five pounds as compensation for wrongful imprisonment. As soon as the prisoners came to know of the affair they boycotted the Jew, and he was obliged to take away his wares unsold.

## CHAPTER VII

It is now time to describe the War Prison as it was when finished in 1812. Though several of the old buildings are still standing the arrangement of the depôt differed materially from that of the modern convict prison. Besides the circular boundary wall which still exists there was an inner wall of the same height with peaked bastions at regular intervals reached by stairways from the outside, from which the sentry had a clear view up and down his segment of the wall. For the first three years the outer wall was only eight feet high, and it was to this defect that Captain Cotgrave attributed the frequency of escapes, which almost ceased as soon as both walls were raised to a height of twelve feet. The space between the two walls was used as a military walk, and along the top of both ran a wire on which a number of bells were hung in such a way as to give the alarm when touched ever so lightly by a person attempting to climb over the wall. The space, amounting to 15 acres 2 roods, enclosed by the boundary wall was intersected by a cross wall of the same height, so

as to divide the ground into two nearly equal parts, the upper, or western portion, containing the Infirmary (now the Tailors' and Shoemakers' shops) and the Petty Officers' Prison (now the Infirmary), which, on the arrival of the Americans, was converted from a second Infirmary into barracks for the garrison. The space between these two buildings was the market square, and nearer to the gate were the two circular buildings used as stores, and the dwellings and offices of the clerks and turnkeys. The Agent and the Medical Officer lived in the houses on either side of the gate, now occupied by the Governor and Deputy Governor respectively. Near the Infirmary, on the site of what is now the wheelwrights' shop was the cachot which has already been described.

The lower or eastern half contained the prisons, seven in number, radiating from a common centre like the spokes of a half wheel. The space of this portion was further narrowed by a semi-circular picket fence of wrought iron supported by granite posts, about thirty feet from the inner wall, the intervening space being turfed over. The prisons were numbered from 1 to 7, beginning on the north, whereas now the numbers run in the opposite direction. No. 1 (now No. 6) is still standing though remodelled : No. 2 has been demolished ; No. 3 was pulled down thirty years ago to make room for what is now No. 5 ; No. 4 is now the kitchen and chapel ; No. 5 (now

No. 4) will be demolished and rebuilt in 1908 ; No. 6 (now No. 3) is still standing exactly as it was, and is used as a workshop ; No. 7 was demolished in 1905 to make room for a modern prison. Up to 1812 there was free communication between all the seven prisons, and it was possible for several thousand men to congregate at any part of the picket fence, a fact that facilitated escape. It was in order to prevent this, and to provide a means of segregating the Romans, that two walls were built, enclosing No. 4 and its yards, and cutting off communication between the north and south yards, each containing three prisons, except by a passage thirty feet wide along the cross wall. This passage was roofed over, and formed a military walk, on which sentries moved up and down on a beat which commanded every part of the yards. The side of this passage nearest to the market square consisted of a very strong iron railing in which was a gate fastened by a chain leading to the market. It was this gate that was broken on the night of the massacre of April 6th, 1815. The site of this military walk is now marked by the two stone lamp-posts nearest to the Governor's offices, which then, of course, did not exist.

Then as now water was brought by a leat from the head waters of the Walkham into the round tank opposite the prison gate. Four underground channels controlled by sluices which may still be seen, conducted the water under the road into four stone-lined

channels, two to each yard, so constructed that the inner channel ran through the kitchens at the upper end of each building, and the outer through the latrines at the lower end. From No. 4 they discharged through a grating under the boundary wall, and so into the Blackabrook. On the site of what is now the Separate Cells building there was an oval bathing-pond which could be filled whenever the weather was warm enough for bathing, but it was seldom used. All the washing was done in the channel which ran through the kitchens. The yards were paved with macadam, and were lighted at night by oil lamps. Each prison had two doors: at sunset the head turnkey mounted to the military walk and blew his horn, whereupon the turnkeys, his subordinates, went through the yards calling "Turn in! turn in!" and locked one of the doors to each building until the last stragglers had passed through the other. When all were locked in, the yard gates were also locked and the night sentries posted. The gates were unlocked at daylight.

The prisons were all alike—huge empty stables of three storeys, of which the uppermost was a cock-loft with an open space between the floor and the eaves, intended originally as a promenade in wet weather. The floors were paved with concrete always reeking with moisture; the stone scuppers intended to run off the water after "washing decks" may still be seen inserted in the wall. A broad

flight of granite steps led to the upper floors. The windows were square holes two feet wide, unglazed and heavily barred. There was no fireplace nor chimney, but those who could afford the luxury had small stoves and ran their flues through the nearest window. The stoves filled the building with their fumes and gave the exterior a very untidy appearance. Each floor was provided with uprights and crosspieces in which ringbolts were inserted every three feet for hanging tiers of hammocks, and two alleyways ran the whole length of the building. Incredible as it may seem no less than 500 men were crowded into each floor, so that buildings only 60 feet in length held from 1,000 to 1,500 men. Yet space was found besides for stoves and gambling tables as well as other furniture. The two smaller prisons, Nos. 2 and 6, of which only the latter remains, were built in 1812 by the prisoners themselves at a small daily wage. They had wooden floors, and were consequently very popular and always overcrowded. In the same year the gateway inscribed "*Parcere Subjectis*,"<sup>1</sup> which gives an old-world character to the entrance of the prison, was repaired by the French prisoners.

<sup>1</sup> A story is told of a worthy principal warder who had just shown a visitor as illiterate as himself over the convict prison. The visitor thanked him effusively for his attention, and asked as a parting favour to have the legend over the gate interpreted to him. Whether the officer had ever heard of the *Inferno* is not certain, but he was overheard to say "I don't know the exact words, but it's in Eyetalian, and it means 'If you once get in, you don't get out again.'"

The village of Princetown consisted of ten or twelve cottages clustered round "The Plume of Feathers." Besides the church, which was begun by the French prisoners in 1811 and finished by the Americans in 1814, there was nothing between the village and the prison but the row of cottages on the west side of the road and the schoolmaster's house opposite them. The barrack square was used as a parade ground, and a favourite amusement of the prisoners was to climb to the roof of their prison and watch the troops engaged in a sham fight with blank cartridge.



## CHAPTER VIII

IN November, 1809, there had been a sudden increase in the number of sick, and from that date until the following April the mortality was very high. This was partly due to an epidemic of virulent measles and partly to the fact that a large number of invalids, enfeebled by imprisonment in the West Indies, were hurried to Dartmoor in mid-winter. The Admiralty at once authorised the engagement of an additional doctor if it should be necessary, but in the meantime, in January, 1810, they received a letter signed "W. W." alleging that there were 700 sick in the hospital, and that the medical attendance was utterly inadequate. Dr. Baird was immediately ordered to inspect the prison and to give his services as long as they should be required. Between November, 1809, and April, 1810, when the epidemic subsided, the deaths amounted to nearly 500 out of a population of only 5,000, and the apparent callousness of the over-worked hospital staff seems to have struck a chill into the hearts of the French which was never forgotten. The Americans found a

journal left behind by one of the French prisoners which alleges that at the height of the epidemic Dr. Dykar had coffins stored in the Infirmary within sight of the patients, and that in the midst of their mental anguish, as they saw these grim preparations, he was heard to say, "The more deaths the fewer enemies"; but, as the same diarist says that 800 died within a single month, we may assume that there were other exaggerations. As always happens in times of a fatal epidemic—we need not go farther than the pages of Pepys' journal of the Great Plague to see it—men soon lose their awe and reverence for the dead, and it is doubtless owing to this terrible mortality that the treatment of the dead at Dartmoor fell so far short of decency. With their shirts for shroud, nailed down in the roughest of deal coffins, they were carried to the mortuary, a little house which stood outside the boundary wall close to the existing gas-works. When a sufficient number was collected, a wide, shallow grave was dug in the gas-house field, and earth was thrown over them to a depth of barely twelve inches. There were no funeral rites—perhaps in the absence of a Roman Catholic priest a Frenchman could not be buried otherwise—but this custom of dog burial was continued even when the dead were Protestant Americans. The Greenhorn tells a grim story—and that he should have thought it humorous shows how far this callous indifference had gone:—there was in his

prison an old Dutchman, so crabbed and surly that no one would consort with him. His neighbours had only to touch his hammock to provoke a volley of outlandish profanity, and so easily were these outbursts produced that the young bloods on either side were wont to play upon his tetchy humour out of mischief. In one of these paroxysms he broke off short with a gurgling sound, and lay still ; when they brought a light they found him dead from the rupture of a blood-vessel. Notice was given to the sentry through the grated window. The turn-key was roused, and volunteers were invited to carry the body to the mortuary. A certain pompous, blustering little man, a Philadelphia pilot, pushed himself forward to conduct the party to the mortuary, and led the way with a lantern. Four corpses were laid out on the table, and the pilot, who was a few yards ahead, had safely passed three when the fourth sat up and stared him in the face. With a hoarse yell he sped back across the yards with his lantern like a flaming meteor, disregarding the challenge of the sentry, and, bursting into the prison, chattered between his teeth, " I—have—I have seen the—Devil—with his glaring—red-hot eye-balls ! " and sat down upon the floor. The ghost proved to be the keeper of the dead-house, who, for the sum of twopence a day, laid out the dead, and slept beside them at night. He growled at being disturbed, directed them where to place the body, and lay down again, and

when they asked him how business thrived, grunted, "Well enough, only too much night work!"

The pilot, whose reputation as a fire-eater was rudely shattered by this adventure, was really in a war prison under false pretences. He had left his family one morning to take a letter-of-marque out of the Delaware, meaning to breakfast with them the next, was intercepted and captured by a British cruiser before he was well clear of the river, and, without hearing from his family, spent nearly two years in Dartmoor. He was wont to say that his last words to his wife were to keep his breakfast hot for him. Landed at Boston late in July, 1815, friendless and penniless, he started off on foot to beg his way to his native place, where, let us hope, he found his breakfast at last.

Charles Andrews refers repeatedly to disastrous epidemics, the smallpox, and "African pox" and the measles, and if we were to reckon up the many hundreds of deaths enumerated in his loose narrative there would have been few survivors. Wild stories of the mortality in the prison had found their way to London, and early in 1811 the *Independent Whig*, a weekly journal, used them as a text for attack upon the Government. In July, 1811, Lord Cochrane, the Member for Westminster, raised the question of the treatment of prisoners at Dartmoor, and though his statements were disproved by Mr. Whitbread and other members, the *Examiner* and

the *Independent Whig* returned to the charge on July 28th. They said that "the soil and air of Dartmoor have been declared the most noisome and pestilential . . . the air of Dartmoor prison is considered most detrimental to health, noisome and malignant, the soil swampy, ever shrouded in vapour, dreary, wet and aguish, and, indeed, what other can be expected from a spot said to be placed in the midst of 40,000 acres of marshy ground . . . the soil has been partially drained, and a town (Princetown) has been built . . . but we believe it to be pretty well understood that the prison was built for the convenience of the town—not the town for the prison. The town was a speculative project, and, like most speculations of the present day, turned out unprofitable. The inhabitants had no market ; were solitary, insulated, absorbed and buried in their own bogs . . . a market must be forced, and thence arose the dreary, deadly walls of Dartmoor Prison." The writer in the *Examiner* had ridden once across the moor, and therefore wrote as an expert witness. Even on a warm autumnal day, he said, he had had to dismount his horse and plunge his hands into his pocket to "prevent them from freezing." "Never are these inhospitable regions to be seen but in clouds." In the two finer months of the year the prisoners "may perchance behold the strange face of the regent of day, never seen, I may venture to say, during eight or nine months of

the year." This writer deals in figures. Had not the deaths numbered 1,000 a year for the first three years? Were there not 3,000 sick, and was not the hospital overcrowded? Were not statements sent in by English gentlemen who had visited this "sepulchre"? and were not all visitors then excluded from the prison? He acquits the administration of the prison of all blame, and lays the mortality at the door of a Government which, having expended nearly £200,000 on the erection of a prison in this "Siberian desert," now attempts to justify its choice. On the other hand, the *Statesman* and other Government prints busied themselves in vindicating the climate of Dartmoor, and, if the truth must be confessed, exaggerated quite as shamelessly.

The Government did not take their thrashing "lying down." On August 15th the Attorney-General was asked for his opinion "whether the said paragraphs do not contain gross and scandalous libels upon His Majesty's Government, and particularly upon them, the said Commissioners (for transport), and whether prosecutions may be maintained, and ought to be instituted, against the proprietors, printers, and publishers of the said papers, respectively, or either, and which of them." On September 17th, 1811, Sir V. Gibbs gave the following opinion: "That these publications are libels, I have already said, and upon this further statement I think that they ought to be prosecuted, but before the trial

comes on I wish information to be obtained of the cause of the extraordinary number of deaths from about November, 1809, to April, 1810. I have heard it mentioned generally, but I must have the facts stated, so that I may rely on it. I wish also to have what I think was stated in the House of Commons, a comparison of the number of deaths in the French prisons and in our militia and in our barracks. Any other fact tending to show the falsehood of the allegations in these libels, or the mischievous effects which they have produced, it will be material to apprise me of."

Whether it was the substratum of truth as to their dealings with Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt in the choice of a site, or the grossness of the charges of inhumanity, which stung the Transport Commissioners into prosecuting these journals for criticisms, which are the stock-in-trade of opposition prints in these days, does not appear ; more probably it was the fact that the French Government had taken alarm, for on August 12th we find them writing a reassuring letter to M. Rivière, of the office of French Marine in Paris, who, among other charges, had made "extraordinary observations upon the climate of this country," and dispatching Mr. Mackenzie, who had just inspected the English prisoners in Morlaix, to inspect and report upon Dartmoor for the information of the French Government. His report, enclosing a plan of the buildings, and a certificate

signed by some of the principal prisoners, attesting the attention and good treatment they had experienced, seems to have silenced criticism from Paris.

And yet, the best that they could say in their defence was that the mortality at Dartmoor in 1810 was less than in the prison hulks, where it was 30 per 1,000, and less than the general average of deaths in all the war prisons in the country, and this in a population composed of men only between the ages of twenty and forty, among whom the death-rate should be merely nominal. Something more than "the peculiar circumstances under which prisoners of war are inevitably placed" is required to account for this. The registers of the prison were carefully kept, and there is no reason to doubt the accuracy of the official returns, which, for the whole period of its occupation as a war prison, are as follows :—

## DEATHS.

From May 1st, 1809, to December 31st, 1809, French	. 149
1810 . . . . . "	. 419
1811 . . . . . "	. 88
1812 . . . . . "	. 142
1813 . . . . . "	. 239
1814 . . . . . French and American	. 198
1815 . . . . . " " "	. 220
1816 (January only) . . . . . French	. 23
<hr/>	
Total . . . . .	. 1478

Out of this total 280 were Americans.

The greater part of the deaths in 1810 were due to the epidemic of November, 1809, which was officially



described as "measles of a malignant type," introduced by some of the invalid prisoners from the West Indies. In 1811, when there was no epidemic, the mortality fell to little more than 17 per 1,000, in which were included casualties from duels, suicides, and accidents, besides the deaths from starvation caused by the horrible practice of selling rations to provide money for the gaming tables. On December 18th, 1811, the *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette* remarks, "We cannot but have heard with the most lively satisfaction that from November 12th to December 13th not one death has occurred within the walls of Dartmoor Prison." With 8,700 prisoners in a very damp and unhealthy season, so much could not have been said of any place in the kingdom, and this "sets the question of the salubrity of Dartmoor at rest." In the autumn of 1812 there came the outbreak of gaol fever, otherwise known as typhus, and the number of sick increased so rapidly that the hospital proved inadequate, and the Petty Officers' Prison (the present Infirmary) had to be hastily emptied to receive them. From this time onward the prison was never free from infectious disease, for as soon as the typhus subsided small-pox and malignant measles were introduced. Vaccination was freely resorted to, but so many Americans refused to undergo it that the United States Government, through their agent in London, made vaccination a condition of receiving a free passage home in a cartel.

In October, 1814, Dr. Dykar was succeeded as Medical Officer by Dr. George Macgrath, and the administration of the hospital was greatly improved. By his kindness, his energy, and his genial manners Macgrath made himself very popular with the prisoners, especially the Americans, who did their best to procure some public recognition for his services from the Government of the United States. Many years later, when he had been knighted and had established a lucrative practice in Plymouth, Sir George Macgrath wrote a report upon the mortality in the prison which is a little difficult to reconcile with the official figures. The habit of flowery diction had not then gone out of fashion, and Sir George allowed his fancy to run free. He describes the prison and the Dartmoor climate as "this great tomb of the living, embosomed as it is in a desert and desolate waste of wild and, in the winter time, desolate scenery, exhibiting a sublimity and grandeur, occasionally of elemental strife, but never partaking of the beautiful of nature, its climate, too, cheerless and hyperborean." . . . He says that it was healthier than any of the other war prisons, and that the prisoners did not suffer from the "hyperborean" cold for a reason that would scarcely commend itself to modern sanitary authorities, namely, that "the density of congregated numbers created an artificial climate" in each building. He does go so far as to admit that newcomers required a seasoning

before they could profit from these conditions. He says that there was only one death from cold during his time of office, but that many were brought to his surgery in a state of suspended animation from cold and want of food, having sold their rations. The only epidemics in his time were measles of a malignant type and smallpox, both imported. They raged with special virulence among the Americans owing to their habits of indulgence and their use of intoxicating liquor. The smallpox degenerated "into an exasperated species of peripneumonia, accompanied by low typhoid symptoms, very unmanageable and destructive." Millbay prison at this time was full of men debilitated by service in the tropics, and these brought disease with them to Dartmoor when they were moved. Dr. Baird made a medical inspection of the prison in February, 1815. He found the temperature inside the buildings to be 25 degrees warmer than it was outside, which was due partly to the cooking stoves, but mainly to the animal heat of 1,200 human bodies, for there was no heating apparatus. From this he concluded that the smallpox had been generated from Dr. Macgrath's "artificial climate," or, in less euphemistic language, "impure air and overcrowding," and dismissed the theory that it had been imported.

For nearly fifty years the bodies of these nameless dead lay forgotten and dishonoured in the gas-house field. Miss Rachel Evans, who visited the place in

1845, says that even then the horses and cattle had broken up the soil and left the bones of the dead to whiten in the sun. In 1865 the piggery inside the walls of the convict prison was abolished, and the pigs running loose in this field began to root up coffin lids as well as bones, so shallow were the graves. Captain Stopford, who was Governor at the time, exhumed as many of the bones as could be found, and having divided them into two heaps, conveyed them to the two cemeteries planted and fenced for the purpose, and, calling one the French and the other the American cemetery, buried them in deeper graves, erecting over them granite obelisks with the inscription, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori,*" a sentiment, alas! which can have appealed to few of them in their last moments. It is unfortunate that the convict sculptor had no means of verifying his history, for he has cut a wrong date for the American war!

## CHAPTER IX

ON the night of October 8th, 1812, the bake-house was destroyed by fire, and until a daily supply of bread from Plymouth could be contracted for, the prisoners were allowed one pound of hard biscuit in lieu. This they refused to accept, and after a long dispute the ration was increased to a pound and a half. When the bread arrived from Plymouth they pronounced it damp and sour and refused it, though a Board of Survey, composed of all the civil and military officers, tasted it and pronounced it sound. Thereupon Captain Cotgrave announced that any man who refused the bread would forfeit the ration for that day, and the Committee elected by the prisoners, thinking that he was acting without the sanction of the Board, and was in league with the contractor, wrote a formal letter of complaint to the Transport Commissioners. It was on this occasion that the famishing Romans are said to have made their horrible attack upon the horses, as related in an earlier chapter. The letter made capital out of the fact that on an earlier occasion the fish sent by the contractors was so stale as to be uneatable, but

they forgot to add that it had been condemned by the Agent and returned in the cart that brought it. A formal reply was sent to them in French, and the discovery that they could appeal over the head of the Agent, coupled with the news, conveyed to them in a smuggled newspaper, that there had been a discussion in Parliament about the administration of the prison, led to the petition to the House of Commons. The petition was smuggled out of the prison by one of the sentries in May, 1813, and posted to Mr. Whitbread with a request that he would present it to the House of Commons. The signatories did not command confidence. Henri Legrand, being an officer, had been on parole at Okehampton, but having been committed to Exeter Gaol for bad conduct, had forfeited his parole and been imprisoned at Dartmoor. Bantrouche, the second petitioner, had also forfeited his parole after a term in Exeter Gaol, and being an expert engraver had contrived to forge Bank of England and other notes while in Dartmoor, and had consequently spent a considerable time in the cachot, from which he was liberated with others on the King's birthday. In order to retaliate upon Captain Cotgrave his first act had been to concoct this petition, but before it could be inquired into he, with other bad characters, had made his escape, the only one of his achievements which the authorities regarded with approval. Corsant, the third signatory, had also been on parole

in Okehampton, where he had been convicted of robbing his fellow prisoners. The petition contained ten complaints :—

(1) That during the epidemic of measles the surgeon and the Agent were on bad terms, and that consequently no steps were taken to stay the epidemic by methods of disinfection, or to admit the sick to the hospital for treatment.

(2) That the Agent allowed the new prison buildings to be overcrowded.

(3) That all invalid prisoners ought to be sent back to France according to the usages of civilised nations, and treated as non-combatants.

(4) That the two new prison buildings were occupied before they were dry, and that a number of Romans were admitted to them.

(5) That the military were encouraged to use violence to the prisoners.

(6) That the rations were bad in quality and insufficient in quantity.

(7) That trading in the market was restricted in an arbitrary manner, the time inconvenient, the prices exorbitant and the regulations childish and irritating.

(8) That the clothing and bedding allowed by Government was not served out when it was due.

(9) That the Agent and his officers did not visit and inspect the prisons as they ought.

(10) That inasmuch as a number of English

prisoners taken by French privateers were liberated while at sea, a like number of French prisoners ought to be liberated as a compensation. The custom of liberating prisoners at sea was called "partial exchange" by the prisoners.

The petition was well worded and the Board did not question its good faith. On May 26th, 1813, Lieutenant-General Stephens, commanding the Plymouth garrison, and Mr. Hawker, a magistrate of Plymouth, were commissioned to visit Dartmoor and inquire into the complaints upon the spot. They found that, so far from the epidemic of measles having been neglected, all the precautions known to medical science of the time, such as whitewashing, sprinkling the floors with slack lime, and shaking out the bedding in the open air, had been adopted, and that the prisoners, instead of suggesting other remedies in vain, had shown so strong an aversion to having the buildings properly aired, that sentries had to be posted at the prison doors to keep them out while the process of disinfecting was being carried out. The complaint about overcrowding was found to be justified, but this was the fault of the prisoners themselves. On arrival they were drafted to buildings where there were vacancies, and no more than 1,000 were assigned to each building ; but they were continually changing their location, either because they discovered



friends in other buildings, or because they quarrelled with the tenants of their own prisons ; so that the roll of each prison was never the same from day to day. The new prison buildings, finished in the summer of 1812, were overcrowded on account of the popularity of the wood floors, and Captain Cotgrave had had to enter them with a strong guard before the number could be reduced to the proper complement. The commission found that the conduct of the military, so far from being harsh and provocative, had been most forbearing. To take the records of the cachot for 1812 alone there are the following entries :—

*February 24th.*—Louis Constant and Olivier de Camp, for striking a sentinel on duty.

*May 20th.*—Jean Delchambre, for throwing a stone at a sentinel and severely cutting his head.

*June 14th.*—F. Rousseau, for striking Mr. Bennet, the storekeeper, when visiting the prisoners.

*June 14th.*—C. Lambourg, for striking and cutting open the head of a sentinel, and causing him dangerous injuries.

*August 19th.*—F. Lebot, for throwing a stone at the postman as he was returning from Tavistock.

*August 15th.*—A. Creville, for drawing a knife on the hospital turnkey.

*August 25th.*—A. Hourra, for attempting to stab William Norris, one of the turnkeys, with a knife.

*September 4th.*—Jean Swan, for drawing a knife on the hospital turnkey.

*September 4th.*—F. Champs, for striking R. Arnold, one of the turnkeys, with a stone and cutting his head.

*September 24th.*—S. Schamond, for throwing down a sentinel and attempting to take away his bayonet.

*September 30th.*—A. Nomand, for striking Mr. Arnold, the steward.

*October 16th.*—G. Massieu, for attempting to stab one of the turnkeys.

*October 16th.*—Pierre Fabre, for throwing a stone at a sentinel and cutting his face.

*October 20th.*—W. Johnson, for throwing stones at a sentinel.

*October 23rd.*—B. Marie, for knocking down a turnkey and attempting to seize the arms of a sentinel. (See March 23rd, below.)

*November 30th.*—N. Moulle and B. Saluberry, for having daggers concealed on their persons.

The cachot records for March and April, 1813, are even more significant :—

*March 13th.*—P. Boissard, for striking a turnkey and threatening to murder him on the first opportunity.

*March 23rd.*—F. Bilat, for striking a prisoner named B. Marie, who died shortly afterwards, and taking away his provisions by force.

*March 28th.*—J. Beauclerc, for threatening to stab

Mr. Moore because he could not procure employment for him on the buildings.

*April 6th.*—F. Le Jeune, for being one of the principal provision buyers in the prison, and for repeatedly writing blood-thirsty and threatening letters.

*April 10th.*—M. Giraudi and A. Moine, for attempting to strike Mr. Anquet, and for being guilty of infamous vices.

The Commissioners found that the complaints about the food were not justified, and it must be confessed that on this head the prisoners were prone to make trivial complaints in the hope of getting more. The bread is attested to have been equal to what was issued to the troops, but as one of the contractors was convicted of fraud in scrimping the weight, we may assume that such abuses did occur.

The most interesting paragraph in the petition was that dealing with "partial exchange." It seems to have been the practice of the French privateers, when they captured a British ship, to land its crew or put them on board a neutral vessel, keeping the officers as prisoners of war. Less wise in their generation the British privateers either kept the captured crews on board expending their provisions, or put into a British port to land them, and every capture shortened their cruise and weakened their power of injuring the enemy's commerce. Thus, when exchanges took place, the French had a prepon-

derance of officers for whom they could demand prisoners of equal rank, besides enabling them to claim exchanges for a large body of prisoners of war who had never been landed in France, and for whom the French Government had not had to pay anything for maintenance. This was what they called "partial exchange," and on this the petitioners founded a claim to release.

## CHAPTER X

By the month of April, 1813, the American prisoners of war numbered 1,700. Seven hundred of these were confined in two old line-of-battle ships, the *Meteor* and *La Brave*, moored in the Hamoaze with a crew of a lieutenant, master's mate, midshipman and 20 invalid seamen. The only occupations in which they could have engaged were closed to them through the representations of English manufacturers, who feared that the output of woollen fabrics, nets and straw bonnets from the prison hulks would damage their trade, and enforced idleness and overcrowding bred sickness and very serious discontent. Captain Pelew, the Plymouth agent for prisoners of war, reported that their growing insubordination might culminate any day in a combined rising which would result in serious bloodshed if not in damage to the dockyard. The Admiralty took alarm, and on April 2nd orders were received to remove a number of the prisoners to Dartmoor Prison. The first draft of 250 landed at the New Passage next morning with their hammocks and baggage, where an equal number of soldiers was waiting to escort them. The march

to Princetown was accomplished with only one halt, and they arrived late in the afternoon to find the moor covered with snow. One can well imagine their depression at the first sight of their new quarters. The buildings to which they were assigned were already overcrowded with French prisoners, who treated them as unwelcome guests to whom the barest politeness only was due.

For one month the Americans were allowed to remain in the buildings assigned to them on their first arrival, watching with amazement the contentment of the French prisoners who had contrived to reconstruct the ordinary life of a French town with its social grades, its commerce, its manufactures, its schools, dancing classes and theatre—everything, in fact, except its women. The more affluent engaged boys to wait upon them, and swaggered about in finery made by prison tailors from materials purchased in the daily market, practised swordsmanship and fought duels, lost their money at the gaming-tables ; the poorer and more thrifty made money as tailors, jewellers, model makers, schoolmasters, professors of dancing and deportment, actors, makers of false coins and even forgers of Bank of England notes ; the thriftless sang and danced and gambled away their time as men will do in every country and under all conditions. For the Americans there were none of these distractions. Too poor to buy even the necessaries of soap and tobacco, they sold their

clothing. April was an exceptionally wet month, and they stood about the yards in knots eyeing the French with envy, and brooding over their wrongs. It was evident that they were ripe for revolt, and Captain Cotgrave, believing the reports brought to him by the turnkeys, determined to minimise the danger of a rising.

The walls that cut off No. 4 prison (now the chapel) from communication with the market and the other yards had lately been finished and the building was tenanted by some hundreds of the unspeakable Romans, who by their vice and crimes had rendered themselves unfit to associate with the other prisoners. On May 1st all the Americans were ordered into No. 4, and were cut off from the market, which, it is true, was of little use to them excepting as a spectacle. They were hurried into the prison before dark and kept there without light or fire until eight o'clock in the morning. For the first fortnight they were compelled to parade in the yard while the prison was being aired. The guards then entered the prison and searched every hammock, bringing out with them any who claimed to be too ill to move. Dr. Dykar, who, from his experience in the American War of Independence had contracted a prejudice that every American was prone to skulking and shamming, would not admit them to the hospital until there could be no doubt whatever that they were seriously ill. All these complaints they

embodied in a letter to the American Agent in London, Mr. Reuben G. Beasley, threatening to enlist in the British Navy unless something was done to redress their grievances, and when day after day passed without any acknowledgment the misery of the Americans turned into despair.

On May 29th the garrison of the militia was changed, and the relieving regiment cheered the Americans with news of the actions of the *Java* and the *Peacock*. On the previous day another draft of 250 arrived from the hulks in Plymouth who were sent to join their comrades in No. 4 Prison. They brought news that the Transport Board, fearing danger from massing too many Americans in one prison, were sending 200 overland to Stapleton near Bristol, and fifty by sea to Chatham. The Stapleton contingent accomplished the march of 134 miles in eight days. They were guarded by an armed force of 250 men, and warned that anyone who left the ranks without leave would be shot without further ado. An allowance of one shilling a day was granted to cover all expenses of rations and lodgings, out of which they were obliged to pay threepence a night for sleeping in the straw of barns and outhouses.

The state of fear to which the Americans had reduced the Admiralty is well illustrated by the orders issued to the ship that carried fifty prisoners to Chatham. Though she was fully manned and



armed, and the prisoners had no weapons but their naked fists, no more than two prisoners were to be allowed on deck at the same time throughout the passage.

At the beginning of July the spirits of the prisoners had revived sufficiently for the proper celebration of Independence Day. By traffic with the French through the yard gate they had procured material for making two ensigns decorated with the stars and stripes, and these they boldly hoisted at either end of the roof. To Captain Cotgrave's request that they would haul down flags that had no right to fly on British soil they returned answer that they hoped to be allowed to celebrate their festival quietly in their own way, and that if he attempted to lower their flags by force he must put up with the consequences. He took them at their word. Guards were marched into the yard, and there was a good-humoured scuffle in which no one was hurt and the honours were divided ; the guards captured one of the flags and the other was carried off and hidden by the prisoners. The affair was not exaggerated by Captain Cotgrave in his reports, but it was a sufficient answer to the complaint that in keeping the Americans apart from the French he was actuated only by malignity. His fear that they would disturb the relations that existed between the French and their guards could not be called ill-founded.

The natural antipathy felt by the Americans towards the half-naked Romans, who shared their prison with them, soon ripened into open feud. On the 10th July a dispute began in the yard during the late afternoon. It was cut short by the turnkeys, who came to lock up the prison, but all night long the herds of naked Frenchmen lay snarling overhead in the two upper floors assigned to them. As soon as the gate was opened in the morning they came tumbling down the stairs into the yard armed with knives, clubs, and stones, and faced about to wait for the Americans. It was such a mob as had waited outside the gate of a prison in Paris twenty years before, only less cowardly, and in outward appearance more bestial. Not suspecting their danger the Americans straggled into the yard, and when about 120 were assembled they found too late that their retreat into the prison had been cut off, and that their comrades could not come to their rescue. They received the attack in a compact mass, and fell in numbers under the rain of stones and club strokes. The affair lasted but a few minutes, for a strong picket of the guard, summoned by the sentries, made repeated charges into the struggling mass until order was restored. About forty persons were removed to hospital suffering from wounds, but all recovered. Captain Cotgrave's report to the Admiralty laid the blame of this affair upon the Americans, and, as he took evidence upon the spot, he was probably right.

Another wall, twelve feet high, was immediately built, dividing the yards into equal parts, and further quarrels thus became impossible.

Late in July 120 Americans were despatched to Chatham for embarkation in a cartel ship for exchange. This left in England about 2,300 American prisoners, of which 490 were at Dartmoor. Though there had hitherto been no epidemic, the mortality had certainly been heavy. Fifteen had died at Dartmoor, seven or eight at Chatham, and not one at Stapleton, where the prisoners seem to have had nothing to complain of.

Early in August small-pox broke out in the prison, and the mortality increased tenfold. The Americans, beside themselves with terror, formed a committee of correspondence, and bribed the guards to carry out letters to Mr. Beasley, representing with pardonable exaggeration that numbers died daily, and that the survivors were swarming with vermin; that they were defrauded of their rations, and that, unless he came speedily to their aid, they must either enlist with the enemy or perish. Of this letter also Mr. Beasley took no notice.

The very natural course of applying to Captain Cotgrave did not occur to them until now. He readily supplied them with the printed rules, and allowed them to see their rations weighed; on one occasion they detected the contractor in scrimping the weight. They now began to organise their

society on the model of the French in the other buildings. Thefts had become so frequent that a committee was elected to draw up a penal code and administer justice. Offenders were formally tried, and, if found guilty, were given twenty-four lashes on the spot. The craving for tobacco was the root of most of the crime, for men would sell the beef ration to Frenchmen through the grating for a chew of tobacco, and steal from their friends when they were hungry.

Late in the month of August the prisoners were startled by the news that Mr. Beasley, the American agent, was at the gate. There was a rush for best clothes ; the yard was cleaned and swept ; hands and faces were washed for the first time. The committee spent the morning in writing out a list of grievances, the spokesmen rehearsed their addresses. At three o'clock he entered the yard, followed by a host of clerks and soldiers. He seemed startled at the extraordinary appearance of the prisoners drawn up in the yellow prison uniforms, and was heard to mutter that he did not think the number had been so great. When he looked into the great prison with damp streaming down the walls, he was seen to shrug his shoulders in thankfulness that this was not *his* sleeping place. The prisoners now crowded round him, pouring forth their grievances, and, after listening to them patiently, he said that he had no funds and was quite powerless ; that the exchange of

prisoners was stopped for the year, and that they must not expect any change in their treatment. As events proved, his representations to his Government did accomplish something, but the welfare of prisoners is the last matter to be considered by a Government as distracted and as impecunious as the American in that ill-managed war.

During the following week a large number enlisted in the British service. This had been going on all through the war, and one cannot avoid the conclusion that in its treatment of the American prisoners the Transport Board was not averse from putting gentle pressure upon its captives to this desired end. The revolt of the American colonies was too recent for the idea that these were not foreigners, but traitorous Englishmen, to have died away, and it must be remembered that the chief cause of the war had been the assertion of the British right to search American ships for deserters, and that more than a few of these men were British seamen masquerading as Americans, who had claimed their discharge as foreigners simply to escape from further service. The enlistment of a prisoner in the British Navy was a good bargain for everybody concerned : for the Government, because it gained a seaman and saved the cost of maintaining a prisoner in idleness ; for the recruiting officer, because he received a bounty ; for the man himself, because he regained a measure of liberty. Of course he ran some risk. So strong was the feeling of the

better sort against enlistment that they went far beyond the limits of peaceful suasion. As soon as it was known that a man was coquetting with the idea he was brought to summary trial, and unless he recanted he was lashed to the grating and flogged and threatened with death as well. Captain Cotgrave met this by sending a note to any man whom the turnkeys reported as wavering, inviting him to the guardhouse, where he was kept out of reach of the prisoners until enough were collected to make a draft for the receiving ship at Plymouth. A draft was usually sent down once a month. After the first few months the Admiralty could afford to be fastidious, and would receive none but trained seamen of sound bodily health. The total number of Americans who enlisted in the British Navy from Dartmoor was 59.

On November 20th, 1814, two prisoners were received from Plymouth who were recognised as having enlisted during the previous winter. They had served in the British Navy until after the treaty of Ghent, and then, feeling sure of an early release, had claimed their discharge on the plea of being Americans. Though their conduct was disgraceful, they would probably have remained unmolested if they had behaved themselves inoffensively, but they were ever boasting of their comfort on a British man-o'-war as compared with that of the prisoners who had not had the good sense to enlist, and flaunting their

prize-money in the faces of those who could not afford to buy any addition to their Government rations. One evening they went too far. Warmed by draughts of small beer, they began to boast that the money which paid for their carousal was won by them at the taking of the United States brig *Argus* when they were serving in her captor, the *Pelican*. They were immediately seized by the bystanders, and while some were for putting them to death, others for flogging them till they could bear no more, some one suggested branding them as traitors. The proposal was received with acclamation. They were lashed face upwards on tables, and with needles and Indian ink the initials U.S. were tattooed on one cheek and T on the other, signifying "United States Traitor." They were then sent to the hospital with a message that for their own safety they had better be kept there. One of them—poor wretch—tried to scrape out the letters with a knife, which brought on an inflammation which cost him his life. The other was severely blistered, but without effect, for when his wounds were healed he returned to the prison with the marks still on him. Three men were arrested and clapped into the cachot, where they were examined, and committed for trial at the next assize at Exeter. A number of prisoners were called as unwilling witnesses for the Crown, and on March 4th, 1815, the accused were removed to Exeter prison in irons under a writ of habeas corpus. They

were acquitted and returned to the prison on March 26th.

The winter of 1813 now began to draw on. November was very wet and cold even for Dartmoor, and improvident prisoners who had sold their bedding, and even part of their meagre clothing, to the French were obliged to lie on the granite floor. No fuel was supplied, and to make matters worse the rule of parading the men in the yards till all were counted was rigidly enforced, despite the bitter weather. Few of them had stockings; some had no clothing but their shirts and breeches, and there were mornings when men fainted at the morning parade from exposure to the cutting wind on insufficient diet. A Scottish regiment now relieved the guard, and won the gratitude of the prisoners by interpreting their orders in a spirit of humanity. They smuggled newspapers into the prison, and the Americans were cheered by the news of the cruise of the *Essex* in the South Seas and the successes of Commodore Perry on Lake Erie.

A less sympathetic regiment would have better met the situation, for, according to *Woolmer's Exeter Gazette* of November 5th, the Americans were "far from being orderly and quiet; they are continually laying plans of escape, not occupying themselves as their predecessors, the French, did in different works and amusements to while away their time."

Among the prisoners were a large number of Dutch,



Danes and Swedes, and it having occurred to one of these that he could claim his release on the ground that he was the subject of a Power in alliance with Great Britain (although captured in an enemy's ship) all those who could prove their nationality were set at liberty.

On December 22nd Captain Cotgrave resigned his post as Agent, and was succeeded by Captain Thomas Shortland, R.N. For four years and a half Cotgrave had discharged very difficult and responsible duties with success. He was a rigid disciplinarian, and he could not temper unpopular orders with geniality of manner, but by his sense of justice and his rigid solicitude for the welfare of his charges he won the respect of the better sort of Frenchmen if he could not win their affection. We must, therefore, not take too seriously the American view of him seen through the jaundiced eye of Charles Andrews; "The name of Isaac Cotgrave, Agent at Dartmoor, of cruel memory, will ever be engraven in odious characters on the mind of every American who witnessed his unparalleled cruelty." The Americans had come to Dartmoor under a cloud, and nothing that they had done had tended to disabuse his mind of the suspicion that they would rise on the first opportunity. But Andrews is prone to these flights of rhetoric. Shortland, whom he hailed as a philanthropist, was soon to suffer even more severely from his pen.

Captain Shortland, the new Agent, was a man of broader mind. He at once relaxed the rule of parading the prisoners in the open which Cotgrave had enforced in the interests of sanitation. The Assistant Surgeon was made to visit the prison daily and to remove to the hospital all who complained of sickness. He offered to forward petitions to Mr. Beasley or to the American Government, and to bring home to his own Government the real condition of the prisoners. But the concession by which he won their hearts was the permission for two of their number to attend the daily market to buy soap and tobacco for the rest. Acting on his advice the prisoners wrote again to Mr. Beasley urging him to pledge the credit of the United States to provide them with clothing, soap and tobacco, and threatening, if nothing were done, to enlist in the British service in a body, and send copies of all their unanswered letters to the President as their justification.

## CHAPTER XI

THE winter of 1813-14 was memorable ; it was said to have been the coldest for fifty years. On New Year's night the buckets in the prison froze solid in four hours. The running stream that supplied all the buildings with water was ice to the bottom ; the prisoners quenched their thirst with snow, and huddled together at night to prevent being frozen ; their breath, condensing on the granite covered the walls with a film of ice. Then it began to snow, and on January 19th the snow was four feet deep on the level, and the drifts reached to the top of the walls. No sentry could face the weather on the military walk, and the guards were all withdrawn to the guard-house. The position of the prison had become most serious. More than 9,000 prisoners and 1,500 soldiers and civilians were entirely dependent for their food on the wagon road to Plymouth, and this was blocked. Salt rations were issued, but of these only ten days' supply remained, nor could they be drawn upon until Captain Shortland at the head of 200 French prisoners and all the guards and civilians that could be spared had spent a whole day in cutting

a road to the storehouse. At midnight on January 19th, when the weather was at its worst, eight Americans, seeing the sentries withdrawn, improvised a ladder and scaled the boundary wall. Ill luck had led them to choose a spot close to the guard-house, and becoming entangled in the wire of the alarm bells they alarmed the guard, who turned out in time to capture seven of them. For these it was perhaps a happy accident, for men wandering half clad over the moor on such a night could scarcely have survived. The eighth ploughed his way doggedly through the snow till he came to a lonely hut. The moormen, knowing that none but escaped prisoners could be out in such weather, secured him and brought him back, and the eight men were clapped into the cachot, where they remained for ten days on two-thirds allowance. They were no more wretched than the rest who passed this awful fortnight bare-legged, with salt beef and snow for food and drink, without fire or sufficient clothing, overrun with vermin and decimated by sickness.

On January 25th a thaw set in, and early in February the snow vanished before the rays of a warm sun. At the same time the prisoners received the first letter which Mr. Beasley had deigned to send them ; it ran as follows : “ Fellow-citizens, I am authorised by the Government of the United States to allow you one penny halfpenny per day for the purpose of procuring you tobacco and soap,

which will commence being paid from the 1st January, and I earnestly hope that it will tend towards a great relief in your present circumstances. I likewise would advise you to appoint a committee by which means you can convey to me any intelligence through the Board of Transport." A committee of six was immediately appointed, of which Charles Andrews was one, to give a receipt for the first month's instalment of 3*s.* 9*d.* a man, now overdue. The day's allowance would purchase 2 lbs. of potatoes or three chews of tobacco, the current rate for tobacco throughout England being 5*s.* 6*d.* per pound. It is very curious to see that this not too princely income of 1½*d.* a day changed the whole mental attitude of the prisoners at a flash, and substituted order for anarchy. This little prison community was the great world in miniature, where when men possess no private property, nor means of acquiring it, there is no play for the qualities of thrift, industry, or honesty, but give them the power of acquiring private property, however small, and straightway enterprise, and the instinct of social order, spring up like grass after an April shower. We shall see further how, when a body of grown men are started fair with an equal income, even without the spur of having a family to provide for, in a matter of a few weeks the money has passed from the lazy and improvident into the hands of the industrious and the thrifty. When this love of acquisition ceases to be rooted in the fibre of

human nature, the dreams of Socialists may be realised.

The thanks of the committee to Mr. Beasley were tempered with an expectation of favours to come. They pointed out to him that Congress could not have granted this allowance without making some provision for clothing, and that soap was of little use without garments to use it upon. They then passed resolutions against gambling, which unhappily do not seem to have got beyond the minutes of the proceedings, and they petitioned to have the ninety negroes separated from the whites, as it was impossible to keep them from stealing, though one or other of them was triced up and flogged every day. Their petition was granted, and the blacks were removed to the two upper floors of No. 4 prison. Later, when the French prisoners had been released at the peace of 1814, No. 4 prison was set apart for the negroes and such whites whose conduct and habits rendered them unfit to associate with men of their own colour. Over No. 4 Big Dick ruled supreme—a gigantic negro six feet seven inches in stature, and powerful in proportion to his height. He was judge, executioner, and often accuser as well, and there was no appeal against his decisions; nor was there any time for any, for the thrashing followed hard on the heels of the sentence. His subjects needed a tight hand, and he ruled them literally with a rod of iron, which he carried in his hand for use on emergency.

The "mean white," banished into his kingdom, knowing that Big Dick had taken his measure, behaved himself seemly while in No. 4, and did as Big Dick told him. The giant grew to enjoy a sort of official position with the authorities, and was allowed indulgences granted to no one else. He might pass the gates and roam about the moor, or amuse himself in the village of Princetown, returning at his own time. It is curious to note that at this period there was no race feeling against the negroes; the American prisoners did not ask for separation until the continual thefts of the blacks became unbearable.

Up to this time 75 had enlisted out of 900, but now there was not a single volunteer, for besides the increased comfort of prison life and the return of milder weather a new avenue of escape was opened. Orders had been received to release every subject of an allied Power taken under the American flag. Thereupon there was a second Pentecost: every Yankee who could muster a sentence in a foreign tongue clamoured to display his accomplishment in the Agent's office as Prussian, Swede, Dane, or Russian, with an accent of the New England variety.

In March the gates of No. 4 yard were thrown open, and the Americans had the liberty of the market and all the other prisons. The better class paid visits to the French officers, some of whom took in the English daily papers. The exulting tone

of these journals at the success of the allied armies, and their confidence of a complete conquest of America could not have been very cheering to them. They returned from the French prisoners full of admiration for the ingenious way in which they had organised their social life, and they immediately set themselves to copy it. On March 18th the first coffee stall was opened. The beverage sold at a penny a pint was hot and it was brown and opaque, but with coffee at 2s. 3d. a pound and molasses at 70s. a hundredweight the term "coffee" was a title of courtesy. Over the stall was painted the following legend :

“ At hap'urth a point hot teay sold heaer,  
Hot kofy at dubble the furst  
If les, in a weak, byr hoka we fear,  
We shud fale, so dam'me—no trust.”

The dealer sat between two tin boilers, with a charcoal furnace under each, and if the contents of the tea urn ran short he would fill up the measure from the coffee urn to the entire satisfaction of the customer, who was none the worse, as he could not detect the adulteration when he came to drink it.

Some of the prisoners now received money from home, and all but the Rough Alleys, who shall be described in their proper place, engaged in some sort of business. Some set up as tobacconists ; others as potato merchants and clothes dealers, and sellers of all kinds of merchandise that could be purchased in



the market, to which they now had free access. They prided themselves jocularly in having obtained what their country was fighting for—"Free Trade and Sailors' Rights." They traded with the French as well as with the market folk. They could buy potatoes at 6d. a score; butter at 1s. 6d. a pound, and they retailed these things at stalls within the prison at a profit.

Some went to work for the French at plaiting straw bonnets at a penny a day; others made list shoes, hair bracelets and necklaces, while great numbers imitated the French in carving beef bones into ships, dominoes and chessmen which had a ready sale in the market. Nearly all the boys—and some of these prisoners of war were under 13—went into the service of the French officers as waiters.

On March 31st they received a letter from Mr. Beasley announcing a further grant of a penny a day to enable them to buy tea and coffee on the two fish days. This additional grant was at once spent in second-hand clothes which they could buy very cheaply from the French dealers.

We must now return to the French. On April 9th a London paper was received announcing the entry of the Allies into Paris and the downfall of Buonaparte. So far from bringing joy at the prospect of freedom after their long captivity this news threw the French into the profoundest gloom. They were indeed past resenting the conduct of some

miserable subalterns of the guard who came into the yard to enjoy the national triumph by boasting of the prowess of the British arms, which were soon to reduce the United States to British colonies again. Princetown was crowded with carriages and horsemen bringing *émigrés* and gentlemen of the neighbourhood to congratulate the French on their release after from five to eleven years of captivity, and in all good faith presented them with the standards of Louis XVIII., and white cockades to wear, but many declared with tears in their eyes that they would rather die in prison than serve any master but their Emperor. In the afternoon these appeared in the yards wearing the tricoloured cockade, having pinned the white ones on the dogs that ran about the yards.<sup>1</sup> In the presence of the visitors and a large number of British officers standing on the walls they solemnly tore the white standard to shreds. Others, however, tamely consented to wear the white cockade. At the end of the month they began to prepare for their return to France. Their furniture, tools and stock-in-trade were eagerly bought up by the Americans at nominal prices. The thoughts of liberty and home had had time to work in them, and the time seemed ripe for

<sup>1</sup> During the prosperous time of the French occupation the number of pet dogs kept by the prisoners was enormous considering the insufficiency of the rations. At Stapleton prison, where a prisoner had maliciously thrown a dead dog into the well, an order was issued on June 2nd, 1813, that all the dogs were to be destroyed, and 700 were killed in a single day.

testing their devotion to the fallen Emperor. In May they were again invited to salute the white standard. Some refused at first, but when they were told that unless they did so they would be kept till the last draft of prisoners they hoisted the flag and donned the cockade, though under protest. On April 20th the first draft of 500 French were marched to Plymouth to take ship for France ; five days later the second released 1,000, and so on every five or six days until the whole had left the prison. The records had not been very well kept, and as soon as it was known that the names of men who were dead and buried were being called there were numerous impersonations by Americans who could speak a little French. About 20 of these passed out with each of the first three drafts before the fraud was discovered, and examinations became more strict. When a draft was called for it was the custom to require each man to produce a full complement of the articles of bedding issued to him, and unless they were forthcoming, however worn and tattered, the man was not allowed to pass. On June 20th, when the last draft was being formed, it happened that one unfortunate man could not produce his bedding. Probably it had been stolen by others to make up their complement. On being refused at the gate he rushed frantically back into his prison to look for it, and then fearful of being left behind he ran back to the gate to plead his cause with the guard. On being again

refused he became frantic with grief, and crying that he had been eleven years in prison, in an agony of despair he pulled out a knife, and there, before the guards and his own countrymen, cut his throat. There is no more sorrowful incident in the history of Dartmoor.

## CHAPTER XII

AT this juncture the British Government certainly did not err on the side of generosity towards Americans. Among the French prisoners were twenty-four Americans who had been taken under the French flag in 1810. Before the American war broke out they had often petitioned to be released as citizens of a neutral State, and after war was declared they applied to be imprisoned with their own countrymen, but both requests were denied. Naturally enough they now claimed to be released as Frenchmen, but this too the Government refused. As a last resort they wrote to Mr. Beasley claiming to be enrolled among the American prisoners of war, but he replied that "he could not receive them as such." By taking service with a foreign State they had divested themselves of every shred of nationality, and legally it is plain that the Government had no right to detain them as prisoners of war. For eleven months they existed on the charity of their fellow-countrymen, but on March 24th, 1815, the American Government consented to recognise them, and they received the same monthly allowance as the rest.

There were included in the last draft all French subjects who had been taken under the American flag, and 121 Americans who had some knowledge of French, lied themselves out of prison by pretending to have been born in French dependencies.

The Government now decided to concentrate at Dartmoor all the American prisoners in the kingdom. From June onwards drafts began to arrive from Stapleton and Chatham. The yard of No. 4 prison not being large enough for the increased number, the other yards and buildings were now thrown open. Having succeeded to all the stock-in-trade and tools of the French as well as the goodwill the Americans now began to grow rich. They could earn threepence a day at the forbidden trade of plaiting straw, to say nothing of the curios which they sold in the market. The work of the dépôt had been dislocated by the release of the French skilled labourers who worked for wages in building Princetown Church and at repairs in the barracks, and the privilege was now allowed to the Americans on the same conditions, namely, that they should always work under the eye of a sentry, and that their pay of sixpence a day should be paid quarterly and if any of them attempted to escape the back pay of the entire gang should be forfeited, and all employment stopped. By this ingenious plan every prisoner was converted into a sentry over his neighbour. Besides blacksmiths, coopers, lamplighters and hospital nurses a large number of men were employed upon

the roads and in building the church. By the beginning of July 150 workmen were thus employed, and the income of the prisoners was increased by £50 weekly : the money circulated in the prison to the profit of the stall-keepers as well as of the market people outside. The prisoners from Stapleton had now arrived, and brought news of the escape of 25 of their number on the march to Dartmoor. It was doubtless this news which first turned their thoughts towards a plan for combined escape. The scheme was to tunnel from the end nearest to the boundary wall, for a distance of 280 feet, as soon as they were allowed the run of the buildings vacated by the French. The fate of this design will be described hereafter.

It happened that at the end of June the battalion of militia which relieved the guard was composed of men who had served their full five years, and were much incensed at not being allowed to return to civil life. Their officers were trying hard to induce them to enlist for service against the Americans, and finding that the men were country yokels, grotesquely ignorant about everything beyond their immediate vision, the prisoners amused themselves by drawing fancy pictures of the horrible fate that awaited anyone caught in arms against the United States. This entirely put an end to recruiting, and the officers retaliated by punishing very severely any sentry who was seen conversing with a prisoner. The result of this friction was that when Independ-

ence Day arrived, and it was almost certain that a call would have to be made upon the garrison to keep order, it was found that the loyalty of the soldiers could not be depended upon, and that they were more likely to take sides with the prisoners than obey any repressive orders given by their own officers. To this fact must be ascribed the remarkable license which prevailed on July 4th, 1814.

The festival did not open auspiciously, for on the previous afternoon Thomas Hill and James Henry, both taken in the brig *Argus*, had a quarrel, and being unable to settle it that night they agreed to fight it out next morning. The fight took place in No. 4 prison at nine o'clock and Henry was killed by a blow from Hill. At the inquest the jury found a verdict of manslaughter against Hill, who was arrested and removed to Exeter to take his trial. At the next Assize he was acquitted and returned to the prison.

These men had narrowly escaped execution, for when the *Argus* was taken by the *Pelican*, one of their messmates, named Robinson, had denounced them and fifteen others as deserters from the British Navy. But there was no corroboration, and they were acquitted.

The preparations had been made on a lavish scale. Two hogsheads of porter had been purchased with permission, and many gallons of rum without : an American standard had been procured, and a banner,



bearing an inscription, had been secretly made in the prison. At eleven o'clock the officers of the garrison and all the clerks and turnkeys assembled on the wall by the prisoners' invitation ; a cask was carried into the yard as a pulpit for the orator, and the banner bearing the words "All Canada or Dartmoor prison for life," was unfurled, to the chagrin of the officers, who knew that an attempt to take the flag would result in a serious disturbance. The oration given at length by Andrews bears evidence of having been touched up by a loving hand. Probably Andrews himself was the orator. After detailing the causes of the war from a point of view strictly American, he extols every capture of a British ship as if it was the only incident of the war, and holds up the conduct of British arms to hatred and contempt, finishing his florid address with an exhortation to patience under adversity. After the oration the British officers, who appear to have listened to the speech with amusement tinged with pity, entered the yard, and talked to the prisoners, expressing their surprise that they should entertain the slightest hope of winning in the struggle, now that England was no longer distracted by the French war, and bidding the prisoners to take comfort from the certainty that they would soon be set free by a peace which would again reduce the United States to the condition of British colonies. The Americans, in laying stress on the superior gunnery of their

sailors, considered that they had had the best of the discussion. The rest of the day was spent quietly.

The prisoners arriving from other depôts brought strange stories of their treatment. For example, the men confined on the *Crown Prince* in her voyage from Chatham to Plymouth had been confined below without drink or victuals for three days. It appears that the crew of the Captain's gig in the course of a shore frolic had stolen a sheep of which the choicer morsels had found their way to the Captain's table. To pacify the farmer and screen his boat's crew the captain paid for the sheep. The story reached the ears of the prisoners with whom the captain was unpopular, and when he was entering his boat with his wife to go on shore, at a given signal they all emitted a sonorous "Baa!" Whereupon the captain climbed the ladder again and ordered every man below without rations for three days.

## CHAPTER XIII

FOR the real life of the war prison at this period it is useless to read between the gloomy and unimaginative lines of Charles Andrews' narrative, which was written to stir the indignation of Americans against England for her inhuman treatment of the guileless and meek American sailors that had fallen into her hands. Fortunately we have a more light-hearted and trustworthy eye-witness in the "Greenhorn," who deserved a better fate than to be published anonymously. He had not been three weeks at sea in a privateer brig—his first cruise—when his ship was taken by three frigates without firing a shot, and he actually landed at Plymouth after the treaty of Ghent had been signed, but before its ratification. He gives a vivid picture of the treatment of a war prisoner at Plymouth in those stirring times. His captor anchored in Plymouth Sound on Sunday, January 30th, 1815, and found hundreds of boats waiting for him, the ship having been signalled by semaphore from down the coast on the previous day. Nominally the boats contained the wives and sisters of the crew; actually there were more than six women

to each man. A quartermaster of a seventy-five at this time once had the curiosity to count the women on board the ship on one of these occasions by an ingenious method of his own. Provided with several packets of pins he went the round of the deck, giving a pin to each woman with an earnest request that she would decline if he came to her again. Before he tired of the experiment he had distributed more than 700.

Warships crowded the harbour, among them the *Victory* and the United States ship *Essex*, dismantled and scarred with shot holes. The forty-six prisoners were landed at once and were met at the landing-stage by an escort of sixty-three soldiers under arms. The people in Plymouth seemed to regard them with pity and respect, but the country people still laboured under the belief that Americans were naked savages with blood-curdling manners. This at any rate was the belief of two of the spectators, whose dress, as described by the "Greenhorn," was probably that of the Devonshire farm labourer of a century ago. They wore large fustian coats with wide skirts and enormous metal buttons; long scarlet waistcoats, corduroy breeches very full in the thigh; coarse blue woollen stockings and high-crowned brimless hats of a light drab, matching the stiff sun-bleached hair and whiskers that framed their rubicund faces. These two charged down upon the melancholy little procession in terror of being too late for the show, and

after staring in amazement for a moment, one of them exclaimed "They bees no more savages than we bees, Jock !"

So far from being dejected the prisoners enlivened the tedious march by skylarking, and the escort was too wise to interfere with them so long as they kept moving along the road. The column was straggling half a mile long when in the steep cutting at Manna-mead it met a donkey cart occupying the whole of the narrow road. The driver was quite ready to back to the top of the hill to make room, but the prisoners, pretending to run to his assistance, lifted cart and donkey bodily to the top of the bank, where they left it. Drenched to the skin by the pitiless rain they struggled on to Yelverton, where they found, sheltering under the lee of the rock, a company of the Devon Militia which was to be their escort to the prison. Dousland Inn, where they halted, was at that time a stone building of two storeys. The ground floor was a single apartment, half kitchen, half barn, floored with rough flags with puddles of muddy water in the hollows. A fireplace, a bar, and some rough trestle tables and benches were the only furniture ; harness and fuel were stacked in the vacant parts of the floor. It was a fit preparation for the rigours of imprisonment.

At nightfall in a hurricane of wind and rain they reached the prison. Some time was occupied in registering their bodily peculiarities in the clerk's

office, and it was pitchy dark when they were conducted to their quarters for the night. Their first thought as the great door shut behind them was that they were in Pandemonium. A glare of light blinded them, a roar of voices confused them ; the huge building was crowded with human beings in fantastic dress busy at every kind of occupation—cooking food over small stoves, reading, walking, dancing, singing, fiddling ; but most were clustered about tables piled with coins, for to such a cypher had the resolution against gambling been reduced. The place was so crammed that it was impossible to find room for their bodies, much less for their bedding, and no one took the slightest notice of them, since this was the hour at which the convalescent returned from the Infirmary. In vain they scanned each face in the hope of finding an old shipmate. Jostling their way through the crowd in each of the three storeys the Greenhorn came at last upon a man whom he had known in his native village, and whose friends he had seen but eight weeks before. The man was so much moved by news of his family that he insisted upon surrendering his hammock for the night. But for this timely accident the Greenhorn must have slept on the stone floor, for there were 1,250 men in the building. He did not sleep well. In a neighbouring hammock a man was busily engaged by the light of a candle in some occupation which required him to be stripped to the skin, and the explanation of his friend that

he was engaged in the quite ordinary occupation of ridding himself of vermin did not conduce to slumber. What struck him most was the high spirits of the multitude. He had expected to find hunger, misery and crime ; but everything indicated contentment, order and good fellowship. At eight o'clock an order was given to count out in messes, which was always done when the personnel of the prison changed, either through new arrivals or discharges from the Infirmary. Each mess consisted of six members, and the Greenhorn's friend at once had him elected to his own mess, from which a member had been expelled on the previous day for misconduct. As the six left the prison together a numbered ticket was handed to the member whose turn it was to be cook for the day. The horn sounded and the cooks went to the kitchen to draw their bread. The numbers were called from the lowest to the highest, and as each ration was issued the cook strung the tickets on a wire. When the soup was issued the ticket last strung on the wire was first called and handed to the cook with the rations for his mess, so that the last at the bread issue was first for the soup and *vice versa*.

At some messes the bread underwent a "shave," that is to say, a thin shaving of the crust was taken off and scorched over the coals to make "coffee," which was more comforting at breakfast than cold water. There were, of course, many who could not get elected to any mess on account of their rowdyism

or objectionable habits, and these formed messes at random for the day. They were called Rough Alleys. Those who failed to come out at the count-out went without their rations for that day. The Greenhorn contradicts Andrews' strictures on the food, which he declares to have been very good, and far more than he had received on shipboard.

On the third day the newcomers were summoned to the clerk's office to receive the allowance of clothing. They had a choice of blue or yellow cloth, but no voice in the question of fit. A man of six foot often received a suit built for a man of four-foot eleven, and he then put himself on the "exchange list," and bartered his coat with some little man to whom a giant's kit had been served out. A regular trade sprang up in these suits, which could be bought from prisoners who had set up second-hand clothes stalls for six or seven shillings a suit, the original owners having died or being too proud to wear the King's uniform.

It is a remarkable fact that the American prisoners kept Sunday as strictly as if they were in puritan New England. Sometimes preachers from outside would hold a service, but this was not often. But whether there was church or not all labour and buying and selling were stopped by public opinion; everyone dressed in his best and cleanest, and spent the day quietly in reading or in paying visits to his friends.



Nine in the morning was the hour for seeing the doctor. An entire change in the medical department had been made since the appointment of Dr. Macgrath, who devoted himself heart and soul to his work, and won the affections of the prisoners by his devotion to duty, his rough Scottish kindness, and his readiness to listen to complaints and to correct abuses. He was a strong man, and it was due to his efforts that there was a great diminution in the mortality, for he insisted upon vaccination, and so succeeded in stamping out the small-pox which had carried off so many.

Let us now take a turn round the prison with the Greenhorn while his impressions are still fresh. Here are two rough, weather-beaten seamen who have never tried to use a tool till they came to prison, yet for many weeks they have been engaged, as we now see them, in building a miniature three-decker out of beef bones. They began with no tools but a knife and a needle, but by dint of selling their allowance of meat for a penny, they have gradually added to their workshop a file, a pair of pliers, a small saw, a little glue, a few skeins of silk for the cordage, brass wire for the pinnings, and a coarser wire for the guns. Getting the bones from the cookhouse they sawed them into thin slabs three-sixteenths of an inch wide, scraped them to a high polish, and with these they planked up the sides and deck of their little craft, fastening them with brass pins so

accurately that the work was as smooth as if it had been fashioned from a single piece. This model when finished had each gun bored and mounted upon running carriages with tackle complete, a movable capstan, wheel and rudder, each block sheaved throughout the rigging, and a full complement of boats and anchors. The most experienced seaman could not detect a rope out of place, nor any part out of proportion, yet the hull was less than two feet in length. If these men had been set to such work when at liberty they could not have drilled a hole or filed two pieces of metal to a close joint.<sup>1</sup>

One Garnier, a sailor of St. Malo, surpassed all the model-makers by building a tiny vessel two inches long, with every part worked to the exact scale. The microscopic guns of brass wire could be run out, the yards could be lowered by running tackle made of twisted hair, the ports opened and shut. He gave a year's work to this model, and it was said to have been sold at the fancy price of £100.

Here we have an industrious firm of six, who form a mess by themselves. The first, who comes in from the running stream with his dishes still dripping and begins to stack them neatly in the window recess is the cook for the day : the second is putting

<sup>1</sup> A very perfect specimen of these models is in the possession of my friend Colonel Armstrong, of Yelverton; Mr. A. Davey, of Tavistock Street, Bedford, has another, a fine model of the *Victory*, 38 inches long and 8 inches deep, which is said to have taken five years in building.

wooden soles to an old pair of shoes by driving through them nails long enough to clinch ; the third with a bone needle is crocheting a pair of gloves out of the ravellings of his cast off stockings—the coarser yarns he will work up into caps and braces to be sold on yonder stall ; the fourth, a tailor before he took to the sea, is finishing a suit of blue cloth for a customer who purchased the material in a market out of prize-money which he won when an impressed seaman in the British Navy ; the sixth keeps the coffee-stall already described.

There to the left of them is a beginner who has just set up in business with a pound of butter, a plug of tobacco, half a dozen pipes, a few skeins of thread, a packet of needles and ten rows of pins. He understands the art of window dressing better than the old-established haberdasher over the way, who is sneering at his rival's attempts to draw away his custom by adding a pea-sized lump to each penny cube. And if we watch him as he makes his first sale we shall see him deftly slip off the pea with his little finger as he hands the cube to his customer.

Hark ! Here is a picture dealer crying his wares. They are all marine or battle pieces, crude in colour and wooden in action, such as are painted by the pavement artists of to-day. The artists discovered their talents while in prison, and for a time the market did a big trade in boxes of colours and brushes. After a time the most assiduous would turn out

passable drawings which sold readily for sixpence after a week's work had been expended on them, for there are those in this over-crowded city who can afford to be patrons of the arts.

And here is old Davis, a great favourite of the prisoners as a crier in extemporised rhyme. He served for many years as an impressed seaman in the Navy, but the hardships of his life have failed to conquer his spirit of mirth, though he himself has never been seen to laugh. It is a prize fight this time, and each champion has paid him a penny to collect spectators and give *éclat* to the event :

“Know ye all, short and tall, great and small, that Bob Starr and Shott Morgan are to settle the difference that is between them to-morrow morning at half past nine o'clock at the Ball Alley, the usual place for these affairs ; and as Bob is a rare one and Shott is a dare one, and the box is a fair one, much sport is expected ; so now come and see—this *chicamaree*—and know that 'tis me—old Davis, afflicted, who is crying you this notice ; although a little rounded in the shoulders, yet he's a r-r-r-r-ready old dog ! whether or no, Tom Collins twee-it- twee-it—”

and away he slouches with his boatswain's whistle to vary his crude poetry at the next corner.

Close upon his heels comes Frank Dolphin, the clothes-pedlar, with a pyramid of hats upon his head and second-hand garments dangling from every part of his person. He, too, sings the virtues of his wares

in rhyme, and does impartial justice to all customers who employ him to peddle their property. Each tattered garment, if you may believe him, has a history, every hole is the mark of a bullet fired in some notable action, and after lying humorously with extraordinary fluency and wit he twirls a threadbare hat on the end of his cane and cries :—

“Try a cap that was worn at the Battle of the Nile, that had its nap carried away by the enemy’s shot, leaving it in the threadbare state you see. Had I the impudence of some in the trade I might say that this hat had a charm against danger, but I scorn to say what I have not authority to prove.”

But his voice is now drowned by a fellow with a tray bawling “Hot plum-gudgeons ! Who’ll buy nice large hot plum-gudgeons for a penny a-piece—just smoking from the frying-pan—oho, my brown plum-gudgeons crisping nice and smoking hot.” These are saucer-shaped cakes of mashed potatoes flavoured with cod, and fried to a delicate brown. Behind him comes a chattering monkey of a negro, who sells the best fritters in the prison, twice the size of any others without a waste of material by reason of his skill in blistering them. “Fr-r-r-ritters lighter dan de punge, bigger dan a nobody’s—de pan so clean what fry’um a man can shabe heself in, or see he purty face dout tearing it to tatters ;—tur-r-r-it, fr-r-r-rit—fr-r-r-ritters !” His tongue is hinged amidships with a spring at either end to do the trills.

In the next yard there is a strong smell of cooking from yonder table spread with dainties, sucking-pig, goose, ducks and fish with sauces ready mixed ; sirloin and rounds of beef smoking from the oven. The three men now sitting down to a good dinner at three shillings a head won heavily at the faro table overnight, and knowing not what the morrow may bring forth at their trade are banking some of their capital where it cannot be staked upon the turn of a card. The proprietor of this establishment is doing well—so well that he will take many hundred dollars out with him at the peace. His patrons are the owners of the gambling tables opposite. Some have piles of silver, others of copper coins before them, according to the means of the gamblers for whom they cater.

The most remarkable feature of the scene is the extraordinary variety of clothing. Whereas in the great world outside the walls men strive to escape remark by dressing in the fashion of the time, the chief object of these men is to escape from a fashion which is a badge of their subject condition. If penury forced a man to wear the blue or yellow uniform provided by his enemies he tried at least to make it as unlike a uniform as possible. To this end some would work the ravellings of their old stockings into the fabric of the cloth, so as to cover it with a woollen fur an inch or two in length, with a design worked in, and these were in great request

among those with a reputation for buffoonery, partly on account of the attention they attracted and partly because of their warmth. Others would sew white facings of linen along the seams, and would rip it off and start again merely for the sake of employment.

Let us pass inside this prison—No. 3 it is. Here by the glazed window the schoolmaster holds class. Grizzled sailors are spelling painfully, and with tongue in cheek are struggling with pothooks and hangers. The schoolmaster has to raise his voice against the music class yonder. They are by way of practising for a concert, a fife, a flute, a clarinet and three violins. The teacher has but one string to his instrument, until his quarter's fees, soon due, enable him to buy others. Musicians would while away many hours at each others' mess-tables. It was not until the procession was formed for the celebration of Washington's birthday on February 22nd that it was realised how many instrumentalists there were in the prison. Fifes, flutes, bugles, trumpets, violins and clarinets in almost countless numbers headed the procession playing "Hail Columbia," "Yankee Doodle," and "Washington's March."

The compact crowd beyond conceals the boxing academy, whose stock in trade is two pairs of home-made gloves, and there beyond, where you see heads bobbing up and down, is the dancing school, whose proprietor has no stock-in-trade at all, but provides the necessary music by whistling.

In this alley there are a number of cribbage and draughts parties, and there beyond is a glee club. The noise is so great that no one can be heard in his ordinary voice, but this is the first thing to which a prisoner grows accustomed.

Behind this canvas screen is the theatre, and there are the players already dressing for the piece. You are free to disbelieve it, but the little man with the long hair and the sabre cut across his cheek is the heroine of every piece. Blowsy or Blowsy Bet—so-called for his fondness for female parts—owes his *rôle*, not to any comeliness of feature—the sabre took care of that—but to the length of his hair, which he has sworn not to cut until he returns to his own country. He is even now pulling up the legs of his trousers that they may not be seen below his skirts, and twisting his locks to cover his disfigurement. While thus engaged he is rating his partner for putting him out by gagging at the last performance, and bringing himself into contempt with his audience. “You lie, you lubberly son of a cow,” retorts the man who acts the lover, “begging pardon for blaspheming : I was applauded the whole time.” But the lady has already tripped off to the box office to check the cash, for the treasurer, who is also scene painter and actor at a pinch—good fellow as he is—is apt at times to be tricky when temptation assails him.

The beer cask yonder is owned by a joint stock



company which sells really good porter, and drives a roaring trade, and so is the lending library opposite, which lets out a number of odd volumes at  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. each, but so low has fallen the taste for letters that this company seldom declares a dividend.

In the yard near the market gate are a number of men working as if their lives depended upon their industry. To-morrow is market day and these are artists and straw-basket-makers who have promised to complete their orders in time. This man is a wood-carver at work upon a Chinese monster. He has a real talent for the grotesque, and many of his productions are on sale in Plymouth and Moreton-hampstead curiosity shops as curios imported from China. Those four who are pounding beef bones between stones have invented a new trade. Dry as the bones appear, an unctuous marrow may be extracted from them when they are powdered and boiled which commands a shilling a pound as a shortening for pastry.

There was one man who with lead stripped from the roof of No. 6 prison, with a secret alloy of his own to harden it and make it ring, used to make English coins that passed readily in the market. He had often been cautioned about the danger he ran, and on several occasions when an unusual quantity of base coin had been passing in the market the Committee had been told that means would be taken to ferret out the coiner, and also the man

who was destroying patches of the roof, if he were not one and the same. One day word was hastily conveyed to him that the Agent was making a tour of inspection through every prison, but his metal was on the fire, and, being a noted wag, he chose to carry it off by sheer impudence. As the Agent came by he actually offered to his staff pieces for sale as he turned them out hot from the mould, and did it with so much self-possession that they passed on with a laugh, saying that they did not deal in medals.

Here is the kitchen of No. 5. There is a head cook and three assistants, all prisoners who obtain their post through interest with the Committee of the prisons, one of whom has just looked in to see that all is right. Over the floor is painted up "No Loungers Allowed Here," and the rule is rigidly enforced. The cooks receive sixpence a day and the skimmings and slush from the kettles, but woe to them if they are caught skimming too close, for besides certain expulsion they may be given two dozen with the cat. The kitchen is furnished with two enormous copper boilers, with a capacity of 300 gallons, and into these go daily the carcasses, a cartload of vegetables, and several bushels of barley. They are even now weighing out from a stack of four hundred four pound loaves, and this for one prison out of five. When we consider the rations of the garrison of 1,000 and the goods of

the market people we may realise what wagon traffic the road leading to Princetown has to carry.

The yard beyond is fluttering with clothes of every shape and hue hanging on a network of clothes-lines, and fifty or sixty men are on their knees at the edge of the watercourses scrubbing and pounding linen. Some are professionals, who take in washing at a halfpenny the piece, or a penny, soap and starch included—extra charge for ironing; some are amateurs at work on their own garments for want of money.

This is No. 4—the realm of Big Dick—with all the vice and dirt of the other prisons concentrated into one. Every second man has a speckled face, for the small-pox found a fertile soil here, and scarce a man escaped it. Here there is more gambling, more dirt and more vice than in all the prisons put together. It was a strange fate that made these walls serve for the chapel of the convict prison.

Whenever anyone became riotous, disorderly, filthy or thievish, he was dubbed a Rough Alley, and insensibly sank to a stratum in society where he could find none but Rough Alleys to associate with him. It must not be supposed that these men voluntarily formed themselves into a separate community as the Romans did, but rather that they fell into it un-awares. A more turbulent set of ruffians than this gang could not be found in any community. They were outcasts like the Romans, but with the difference

that while the Romans lived like beasts they were not fierce beasts, but the Rough Alleys, less bestial in their manners, revelled in crime and violence. If a crowd collected suddenly, or there was a scuffle or a fight, or even loud exclamations, their watchword, "keno!" was shouted by the nearest; "keno!" was taken up by another; the cry went echoing and reverberating through the yards, and out of every hole and corner tumbled filthy, tattered and half-naked figures with grimy faces and stooping gait, scudding towards the scene of disorder, eager to be foremost in the fray, with a demon relish in their rat faces. Normally they might be seen at the offal heaps where the sweepings of the prisons were piled until the scavengers' carts came for them, poking and turning the filth with sticks in the hope of finding a cut potato or a cabbage stump. In this pleasing occupation the Greenhorn found one of his old shipmates. At the moment of recognition he was in full flight, with a tall scarecrow of a man as ragged as himself in pursuit, and as he ran he dropped a turnip which proved to be the bone of contention. He explained that the other gentleman had dug out the turnip, but that, considering that all was common property in the dung heap, he took it from him and ran. "The one I dropped," he said, "wasn't worth keeping; it was sunburnt and pithy; but look"—and here he looked cautiously about, and opened the bosom of his shirt wide enough to disclose a large white one—"isn't

that a beauty?" There was one—a lanky, loose-jointed creature—none knew his name—who had been taken prisoner on the Canadian frontier at the beginning of the war, and had been in prison at Quebec, Halifax and Chatham before he came to Dartmoor. Probably the little brains he had ever possessed had given way, for he was never heard to utter more than a monosyllable. None would mess with him, and he was counted out in the "Odd Mess," consisting of from one to six men who were unfit to associate with any others. He was for ever prowling about the offal heap in search of edible filth which he swallowed raw as he found it. Even the worst of the Rough Alleys banned him, and twice had he been tried and sentenced to be stripped, laid in the bathing-pool in mid-winter and thoroughly scrubbed with sand and brush for his filthiness. Once he was the subject of a wager that he would eat five loaves of three-quarters of a pound each, with a pint of tea to each loaf, in a given number of minutes. When time was called he had half a loaf still to eat, but by a series of desperate gulps he got it all down, and after casting about to see that there was no more to be got, he left the circle without a word as if nothing unusual had happened. As he prowled about the yards people would amuse themselves by tossing him a crust, a herring's head, or a candle end, which he would catch dexterously and swallow ravenously, and watch with monkey-like cunning for

the next missile. He was at last sent to the infirmary as being too dirty in his habits to live in the prison, and he remained there until the last draft.

Only the most criminal and unruly of the Rough Alleys were banished to No. 4 to live with the blacks. Two of these were the acknowledged leaders of the gang. One was a German, the other may have been of any country, for he spoke half a dozen languages with fluency. Sodom and Gomorrah were the names they went by, and though they were many times brought to trial for thefts, they were always clever enough to escape by laying the blame on other shoulders. There came a day when a Jew trader pitched his baskets close to the gratings where a number of Rough Alleys were assembled on the pretence of trading. Suddenly his watch was twitched from his fob, and he saw it vanish like a flash through the grating. A hue and cry was raised through the prisons, for it was felt as a stigma upon the whole community that one of the market people should have been robbed by a prisoner in broad day. After two days' investigation by the committee, the theft was brought home to Sodom and Gomorrah. When summoned to trial they offered no defence, and they were sentenced to have their hands tied and be handed over to the market women for chastisement. The crier made the sentence known to the garrison as well as to the prisoners, and attended by the men told off to carry out sentences, who were there to see

that only women inflicted the punishment, they were led forth to the market at the busiest time of day. The crier explained to the women that these were the heads of the gang from whose pilferings they had suffered, and that they were free to pay off all old scores. An Amazon, with the strength of a man, then stripped up their shirts, twisting them so as to form bags for their heads, and hauled them over a bench, and then, with the first weapon to hand—a riding whip, a shoe, a bunch of celery, or a pair of dressed fowls—the women set to. How far it would have gone one cannot tell, had not the fish-woman—the virago who had taught Wellington to be a real general—set to with a gander snatched from an adjoining stall, when, to use her own words, “Dom the twaddling baste, it slupt off the handle,” and caught another lady, who was using a quarter of lamb, full in the breast, thus provoking a controversy in which the culprits were forgotten.

The Greenhorn has left us a most vivid description of one of these trials. Each of the prisons, except No. 4, was managed by a committee of twelve elected by the inmates. Any byelaw proposed by this committee for the regulation of cleanliness or individual rights was put to the vote by the crier, and if a majority said “Aye” it became law there and then. None was allowed to plead ignorance of the law more than once. All cases in dispute, and all criminal cases, were brought before as many members

of the committee as could be got together, and there was no appeal from their decision. It is a remarkable fact that not a single case occurred in which their decision was not accepted, and there was always a large majority eager to carry out their sentences for the sake of law and order. But the procedure was a medley of form and informality. In the case described a boy of sixteen had stolen a shirt and sold it for a shilling, because the smell of a hot roll had seduced him from his natural honesty. A dozen men stepped forward and tendered a shilling to the loser of the shirt, who for his part disclaimed any wish to take either his property or its value. He even expressed a faltering doubt as to whether it was really his shirt after all. "Recollect," said the judge sternly, "that you are on your oath," and the owner, thus pressed, reluctantly admitted that it was. A member of the committee acted as prosecutor, and any bystander who could catch the judge's eye took his turn as counsel for the defence. In this case the prosecutor had a thankless task, for, as the sympathy of the crowd was with the accused, every effort was made to throw him out of temper and win the laugh against him. The first counsel for the defence was the wit of No. 5 prison, and he talked and cracked jokes for five minutes with such volubility and such intentional disregard of the business before the court that the judge grew weary of calling him to order with his mallet. All this



was to gain respite for the boy, and the trial would have been talked out, had not a burly tar interrupted the proceedings, with the only speech really to the point. "I know what it must come to. It's like the Navy: when a fellow is once put on trial all the pleadings in the world won't save his back. If it's all the same to the judges and the boy I will take the two dozen for him; so say no more about it, but lather away. When it's over you won't see whether there are two dozen more or less on my back, after the scoring it's had these last sixteen years." The offer was not accepted, although it was repeated next day at the gratings. Law was law, and the boy was ordered a dozen lashes—half the usual sentence—on account of his youth.

Next morning at the appointed hour he was led out; his back was bared to the February blast, and he was triced up to the gratings. Blood was drawn at the first blow, but before another could be struck Captain Trowbridge, the commissioner appointed by the committee to carry out the sentence, shouted, "Hold on! what bungler is that with the cat? Give it to one who knows how to use it." The man chosen out of those who sprang forward asked innocently what the count was. "Five," said Captain Trowbridge, whose memory on such occasions was apt to fail him. "Six, seven, nine, eleven, twelve!" completed the punishment with scarce a reddening of the skin, so tenderly was the cat handled.

But now comes the remarkable part of the story. As soon as the boy was taken down the onlookers began to banter the stout champion who had offered to undergo vicarious punishment, saying that he would not have come off so easily if his offer had been taken. "Hard or soft," he said ; "I'll take a dozen for a shilling any time." The shilling was tendered ; he stripped and was triced up like the boy, but, as he predicted, the back he exposed was so seared and scored by former floggings, that out of the four who handled the cat not one could roughen the skin. The counting was as erratic as Captain Trowbridge's but with this difference—that the omissions in the boy's tale of lashes were, with unpardonable carelessness, added to his, but he never moved, except once to kick sideways at the flogger for the "baker's dozen " he was throwing in. This callous indifference to pain, almost incredible in these days of high thinking and soft living, makes it easier to understand the heroism of the British seamen in the carnage of the naval battles of Nelson's day.

## CHAPTER XIV

DESPITE the pious resolution to expel gambling mentioned by Charles Andrews, gambling was the great social evil of the place. Andrews, it must now be evident, did not give a truthful picture of the prison ; he wrote his book for the purpose of exciting national antipathy in America. He was determined to represent the English as cowardly tyrants and the American prisoners as virtuous, meek, and down-trodden men, with every spark of mirth and jollity crushed out of them by ill-treatment. The Greenhorn frankly admits that gambling "was the worst stain upon the body of prisoners, and the only vice from which nineteen-twentieths did not keep themselves aloof." Every kind of game of hazard was played throughout the prisons, from the penny *sweat-cloth* to the more fashionable *vingt-et-un* whose bankers were an association amply supplied with funds. It was always a matter of wonder with visitors whence came the large sums that they saw piled on the tables in fanciful pyramids and battlements of three-shilling pieces and half-crowns. It was, in fact, the prize money of men who had served

in the British navy, and who, on the outbreak of hostilities, had refused to fight against their countrymen. Instead of being sent home these men had been consigned to Dartmoor as prisoners of war, to remain there until peace was signed, as such prisoners were never exchanged. Their numbers had now risen to 2,500, and their back pay and prize-money was continually flowing into the prison in instalments. Some drew their whole share at once. There was one who received a large sum—said to have been £1,100—on a Monday, and on the Thursday following he had not the means of buying a cup of coffee; all had gone to swell the piles of coin heaped upon the gaming boards, and he had not even the excuse of intemperance. The history of this man deserves a passing notice. Many years before the war he had been pressed into the British navy, and had been taken prisoner by the French. During a combined attempt to escape, in which he took part, one of the French soldiers was killed, and for this he was confined in an underground dungeon for some years. At last he was exchanged, and he continued to serve in the navy until the American war, when he gave himself up as an American. In the large sum which he received was included not only his pay and prize-money, but also his pay for the whole of the time he had spent in a French prison. In 1837, though verging on seventy, he was still serving on an American sloop-of-war. He had grown talkative

about his adventures, and not infrequently he played havoc with the truth.

The Admiralty rule of admitting none to parole except the masters and first mates of ships mounting fourteen guns and over brought a good many persons of means into the prison. If a commander threw his guns overboard before capture he could not claim parole, and the owners of privateers who were often on board their own vessels in a private capacity went to prison with the hands before the mast. Many of these had correspondents in London who allowed them to draw money whenever they required it. Moreover, in those eventful days prudent men did not put to sea without money in their pockets, knowing how much depended on it if they were captured.

In addition to all these sources of income the soap and coffee allowance from the American Government of  $2\frac{1}{2}d.$  a day amounted to no less in the aggregate than £2,000 a month.

Though the greater part of this wealth found its way to the tables it was continually changing hands, and it is a remarkable fact that few, if any, of the gamblers took money out with them at the peace, while men who embarked in trade and were careful took enough back with them to America to keep them comfortably until they could find employment.

The most alluring game was Keno (the Spanish Quino). As many as twenty or thirty could find room at the table, and each player paid a penny for a

card, and the combined stakes went to the player who had the keno. The proprietor took his toll out of the stakes, or if he liked he, too, might draw a card. No one could lose much at this game, and many frequented the Keno table merely to while away a couple of hours daily. Most of the gambling, too, took place after dark, and the tables, lavishly illuminated with candles, seldom closed before daylight. The Keno table which enjoyed most popularity was pitched in the cockloft of No. 5 (now 4A and B prison, soon to be demolished). It owed its popularity to the eccentricities of its proprietor. He was a man of extraordinary physiognomy, with eyebrows so bushy that they left you in doubt whether he was not blind, except when he was raking in his pile, when for a transient moment they shot forth a sparkle of delight, before their bushy shades closed over them again. His harsh voice carried to the farthest corners of the building, and as he gave out the numbers of the cards in improvised rhyme, he swung his body rhythmically in the most extraordinary contortions. A specimen of his incantation has been preserved to us : regarded as poetry, it is not a brilliant effort even as improvisation, but it is a fair specimen of the rhyming to which the criers and clothes-dealers and hawkers of the prison were incurably addicted, and though this man played Keno on every weekday for many months he is said never to have repeated the same rhyme twice.

“ Now silent, gentles, let us be,  
Nor wink, nor speak, nor cough, not any,  
Naught can ye win—not a baubee,  
Who thinks aloud, no, not a penny.

Watch ! we begin with thirty-four,  
Fegs ! forty-six is summat more.  
If seventeen’s a number low,  
Lower still is number two,  
Egad ! look sharp ! for ninety-eight  
Is high, yet seven will set it straight.  
Don’t hold your breaths ! ’tis forty-nine,  
Thirty is a choice of mine.  
Says sixty, ‘ I’ll a courting go,’  
Said sixteen, ‘ Yes, you don’t, I know.’  
That sulking six poked out his nose,  
Quick ten slipped by and said, ‘ Here goes.’

It’s twelve o’clock ; ah me ! Oh whew  
Here’s fifteen sits all in a stew.  
‘ Oh, waths the matter,’ said twenty-six.  
Lisped eight, ‘ I’th in a sorry fixth.’  
What, sixty-four, are you about ?  
‘ Here,’ says nineteen, looking out.  
Says thirty-three ‘ I’se crooked legs.’  
Says eighty-five, ‘ I has no pegs.’  
Hand-cuffs and cramps ! Here’s eighty-eight,  
‘ Fie, shame ! ’ cries five, ‘ these crooks I hate ’ !  
Old hundred is a round one, ye know,  
But rounder still is naught, that’s keno ! ”

## CHAPTER XV

ABOUT the beginning of August, 1814, Captain Shortland threw open to the Americans the south yard and gave the officers leave to move into No. 6.<sup>1</sup> Vague plans of digging a subterraneous passage had been mooted, but now definite proposals were sent to No. 4 prison, and, the better to conceal the design from the sentries and turnkeys, the general mind of the prisoners was sought in a doggerel verse which went the round of the yards. When all were agreed a number of Bibles were got together in each prison, and every man was solemnly sworn not to divulge the plan by word or sign on pain of being put to death in such a way as would defy discovery. When all were sworn a secret committee was appointed to act as spies upon the rest, and particularly to see that no prisoner got into confidential talk with the turnkeys or sentries. Working shifts were appointed to carry on the excavation by night and day. Careful surveys and measurements were made, and on August 20th the first stone was lifted. The plan was to sink a shaft 20 feet before beginning to tunnel,

<sup>1</sup> Now No. 3 prison.



so as to bring the roof below the level of the road outside. A horizontal tunnel 250 feet long would pass under the foundations of the walls into the open.

The digging was comparatively easy, for the subsoil proved to be composed of the sandy débris of granite containing very few boulders, but the great difficulty was to dispose of the soil removed. Through the end of each prison ran the open conduit which carried off the sewage. The stream was rapid owing to the fall, and large quantities of the finer sand were fed into it by handfuls without attracting attention. The fear that the grating at the outfall, by becoming choked, would lead to discovery proved to be groundless, and as No. 5 prison (now No. 4) was empty, and never visited by the turnkeys, a party was put to work there in open day to dig a third tunnel, stowing the dirt in a hollow which they found under the prison. To dispose of the heavier gravel the prisoners asked for lime on the pretence of whitewashing the rough stone walls of the two prisons, and with the lime and gravel they mixed a sort of mortar, and plastered the walls, whitewashing it over to disguise its yellow colour. By having three tunnels they hoped, if one or even two were discovered, to be able to concentrate their energies upon the third.

Fresh drafts continued to arrive from Chatham and the West Indies, and all were sworn to secrecy.

By the end of August the three tunnels had been pushed about 60 feet in the direction of the wall. September came and there was not a sign that any suspicion had been aroused, though two of the prisons were examined every day by the turnkeys, but the shafts were covered by a single slab of concrete which was fitted so carefully into its place that it would require the minutest search to discover it. Conceive, then, the dismay of the prisoners when on September 2nd Captain Shortland entered the prison with a strong guard, and going straight to No. 5, informed the prisoners that he knew of their design and was come to see the hole. For some time he failed to discover it, but by dint of sounding the floor with crow-bars the shaft was at length disclosed. One of the turnkeys was at once let down with a light, but the air was so foul that his lamp went out, and he did not penetrate further. The working gang had had the same difficulty, but had overcome it by contriving to burn a lamp at the farther end, which kept the air respirable by creating a draught. The guards were much exercised as to the means by which the soil from the tunnel had been disposed of, but this the prisoners kept a close secret.

The prisoners were immediately removed from the three prisons contained in the south yard to the prisons in the north enclosure, but nothing being known about the tunnel from No. 4, which stood in a yard by itself, the prisoners in that building were

left undisturbed. The shaft in No. 5 prison was then filled up with large stones.

They were kept in No. 2 until the 8th September when, owing to the bad state of the roof, they were again sent back to the south yard. On the 10th a large draft, chiefly composed of British bluejackets who had claimed their discharge as Americans, was received from Chatham, and the prisoners were alarmed lest they should be sent to No. 6, and should incautiously betray the existence of the tunnel before they could be warned. But the newcomers, together with all the whites in No. 4, were ordered into No. 7, and No. 4 was given up to the blacks. The prisoners now convened a secret court of inquiry to discover who had betrayed them and several suspected persons were arraigned.<sup>1</sup> It was well that the evidence was not thought strong enough to warrant the taking of a man's life, for when they had had time for calm reflection they accepted the suggestion that the betrayal had been accidental through a few unguarded words used in

<sup>1</sup> The evidence was particularly strong against a man named Bratt, belonging to the United States brig *Argus*, who was believed to have betrayed the scheme by some unguarded remark to one of the turnkeys. Believing his life to be in danger Captain Shortland had him removed to the guard house, where he remained until a cartel was ready for the rest of his shipmates. But on going on board at Dartmouth he was so beset with threats by the other Americans that he escaped to the country, and worked at his trade as a blacksmith until his nationality was discovered and he was sent back to Dartmoor on April 1st, 1815, three weeks after the ratification of the treaty.

the hearing of the turnkeys, for if any person had deliberately given information the tunnels in Nos. 4 and 6 would not have been left undisturbed. Shortland's remark that he knew about the shaft in No. 5 was taken to be a shot fired at random.

As soon as the stir had subsided, and the officers had been heard to ridicule the idea of any attempt to escape with such a host of guards and spies outside the walls, an opinion with which the prisoners pretended to concur, the blacks were ordered to proceed with their tunnel, reporting progress every evening. The shaft in No. 5 was reopened by digging round the stones until the old tunnel was reached, and progress in each tunnel was timed so that they should all debouch at the same time. Andrews says that they had actually pushed on until they were within forty feet of the wall and counted upon making their escape in another week, and the end of the tunnel from No. 5, which was discovered when the foundations of the modern 4C prison were laid, was certainly not far from the boundary wall.

The plan was to break out through the tunnels at ten o'clock on some dark, stormy night, each man being armed with a dagger forged in large quantities by prisoners who worked at blacksmithing. When once outside it was to be every man for himself. They were to make for Torbay, and there seize the fishing boats and other unarmed craft, and steer for the French coast. None were to be taken alive.

It was a wild scheme, and fortunately for the prisoners themselves it did not come into execution, for one day a prisoner named Bagley, of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, walked up to the turnkey in open day, before all the prisoners then in the yard, and after a brief conversation passed out with him through the gate to the Agent's house never to return. Knowing that it would be certain death to him if the prisoners could lay their hands on him, the Transport Board gave him a passport to go where he would, and Charles Andrews, one of the authors of the plot, was clapped into the cachot. The prisoners were removed to Nos. 1 and 3 in the north yard, and every man was placed on two-thirds allowance for ten days to defray the cost of the damage done to the buildings. That was the end of all attempts to escape by burrowing, for the Greenhorn, who arrived shortly after the discovery, does not even mention the incident.

I have accepted Charles Andrews' account of this incident though I am rather doubtful whether tunnels were ever made from No. 4 or No. 6 prison. As will presently be related, the shaft from No. 5 discovered in 1881, which Andrews describes as being twenty feet deep, was not more than ten feet from the surface, and only large enough to hold a man in a stooping posture. The stones with which Captain Shortland had blocked the shaft were found, but there was no sign of any attempt having been

made to get round them after they had been thrown in. Excavations which have been made from time to time across the line of the supposed tunnel from No. 4 encountered no tunnel, and I am inclined to think that Andrews purposely magnified the enterprise which he himself had devised. If the scheme had so nearly reached achievement as he represents it would certainly not have escaped the attention of the Greenhorn.

## CHAPTER XVI

AFTER the abortive attempt to escape, the prisoners settled down to their usual employments, and the life of the depôt was as cheerful and busy as the Greenhorn describes it in his vivid narrative. It might have remained so till the end, but for an extraordinary series of blunders on the part of the authorities, both British and American. The trouble really began in August, 1814, when there arrived at the depôt four men under sentence of solitary confinement in the cachot for the whole period of their detention. Their names were Simeon Hayes of Baltimore, John Miller, an Englishman, James Rickor, and Elisha Whitten of Massachusetts. Hayes had been at Dartmoor before, having been captured in a privateer bound for Bordeaux during the French war ; he had been confined with the French prisoners until exchanged, and then, returning to America, he had shipped on board the privateer *Surprise* for a cruise in the Pacific. Here a small merchant vessel was captured, and the four men were put on board of her as a prize crew, with orders to keep near the privateer. But on the appearance of a British frigate

the *Surprise* took to her heels with the frigate in pursuit, and the men found themselves alone with practically nothing on board to eat but the oranges with which the schooner was freighted. A few days later they fell in with a brig, and resolving to take her by stratagem, they hoisted a signal of distress, and opened fire on her as she approached from four six-pounders which their vessel carried. The burnt matches were thrown away so carelessly that some fell into the hold where the powder was stored. The brig outsailed them and escaped, but shortly afterwards the British frigate *Ceres* hove in sight, and boarded them, putting a prize crew on board. Finding the matches in the hold the prize crew accused the four Americans of intending to blow up the schooner, and they were clapped into irons on an allowance of six ounces of bread for the forty-two days occupied by the *Ceres* on her voyage to England. Without further trial or inquiry the Admiralty sent them to Dartmoor, with orders that they were to be kept in solitary confinement in the cachot for the remainder of the war.

The keeper of the cachot was an Irishman named Carley, who, either out of pity for them, or to earn the bribes so liberally subscribed by the other prisoners for the alleviation of their sufferings, kept them supplied with comforts whenever he could smuggle them in without the knowledge of his superiors. For the first four months these wretched



men had no light, except such daylight as filtered through the gratings near the vaulted roof of their dungeon, but afterwards Carley contrived to supply them regularly with candles. At the end of six months they were allowed to walk up and down for half an hour every day by the side of the sentries, and so great was the sympathy of the prisoners with them, that a crowd of two or three hundred used to assemble at the nearest point of the railing to watch them at their daily walk. On one of these occasions a note was tossed to them, inviting them to make a dash for the railing, and promising them a safe hiding-place if they should succeed in breaking into the prison. For some time they refused this offer for fear of getting their kind-hearted gaoler into trouble ; but Carley, a devout Roman Catholic, never missed his duties on a Sunday, and on February 13th, 1815, during the hour of Mass, Hayes watched his opportunity when the four sentries were turning on their beat, scrambled to the top of the picket fence, and threw himself headlong into the crowd assembled in the north yard. He was hurried into No. 1 prison, but the search being hot, he was immediately removed to No. 4, and metamorphosed into a darkey with soot from the cookhouse. On the following morning the men were counted out of each prison singly, with Carley at the door to identify his lost bird, but not a man could he see who was in the least like him. For some days the men in the yard

were carefully watched, and then a peremptory order was issued to the prisoners to deliver up Hayes on pain of having the market stopped for ten days. The crier then went through all the buildings, beginning with No. 1, shouting, "Shall the prisoner, Simeon Hayes, be given up to be sent to the cachot? Aye or no?" and there was a roar of No! from every corner. Not a voice of all that 6,000 cried Aye! The market was immediately closed, and the price of bread, meat, vegetables, and coals at once went up 400 per cent., and all but the gamblers were reduced to their bare prison rations. In the meantime poor Carley wandered about the yards and the prisons in the hope of regaining the favour of his commanding officer by recognising the fugitive.

Hayes had changed colour more than once during these events, from black to olive, and from olive to black again, and his dress had undergone even more frequent metamorphoses, for in the morning he might be in pilot blue, in the afternoon in the King's yellow, in the evening in the woolly clown's garment which the professional jesters affected. When thus attired he would jostle and joke with the gaping turnkey, who was scrutinising the features of every one that passed him. At last some traitor must have given information, for the authorities concentrated their attention on No. 5, where he happened to be, and the prisoners flatly refused to leave the building to admit of a more thorough search. Thereupon

Shortland marched sixty soldiers into the yard with orders to drive the prisoners out at the point of the bayonet.

The scene degenerated into a broad farce. Before the soldiers pranced a mad and uproarious avant-guard, capering, turning somersaults and riding pick-aback, and behind surged a taunting and derisive rear-guard. Up and down the staircases and alleys the poor soldiers panted, until they could go no more, and not a man had been got into the yard. When a halt was called the turnkey suggested that being sailors the prisoners would not be driven by soldiers, and asked leave to try his hand. He blew his horn and within twenty minutes there was not a man left in the prison. The soldiers searched the building and sounded the floor, and then filed out in discomfiture. Had a certain stone been raised they would have found their man coiled into a space that could scarcely have held a sheep-dog. He was half suffocated, and when he recovered his breath he roundly declared that he preferred the cachot, and that when the soldiers were prodding between the stones he had almost cried out that it was fresh air and not cold steel that he wanted.

Meanwhile in the yard outside matters had almost come to extremities. It was naturally galling to Captain Shortland to find that his authority over the prisoners was less than a turnkey's, and he now ordered the prisoners angrily back into their prison,

declaring that he would keep them there without water until Hayes was surrendered to him. But the prisoners refused to budge from the yard, saying that as they must have water they would stay where they could get it. Up and down the yard the crowd surged before the bayonets, increasing rather than diminishing now that the news of a game of baiting redcoats had spread to other buildings. The behaviour of the Rough Alleys was such that the quieter men withdrew, feeling that firing was inevitable. The futile manœuvres of the soldiers had lasted a good half hour when the crowd found itself jammed in the narrow passage between Nos. 5 and 6, with the soldiers close on their heels and within five paces of the rearmost. At this moment a boy picked up a stone and threw it with all his force at Shortland's head, grazing his cheek. On the impulse of the moment he gave the order to fire. The carnage among the compact body of 2,000 men would have been terrible if the order had been obeyed, but the captain in command struck up the muskets with his sword. An eye-witness declares that Shortland then shouted, "You damned villains, fire!" and that the captain stepped coolly in front of his men, saying "As you were!" and that Shortland, after a moment's hesitation, turned and left the yard without a word, followed by the soldiers. A great hush had now fallen on the prisoners; as the soldiers tramped away no taunt

was flung after them ; the joke had gone too far, and they knew that death had been very near. But not a man had flinched when the muskets were levelled ; among the foremost the right hand had gone to the knife, and that was the only movement.

No further efforts were made to arrest Hayes, but a few days later, on the occasion of a feast to celebrate his escape, he responded once too often to the toasts, and becoming reckless, ventured into the yard, where he was immediately recognised by Carley and tamely arrested. He suffered the nominal punishment of ten days' confinement in the cachot where his three companions had remained, and they were then liberated and the prisoners saw no more of them. In after years he became the host of the Baltimore House in Baltimore, and the stories of his adventures at Dartmoor lost nothing in the telling.

As might have been expected the discipline of the prison rapidly degenerated after this incident. For eight or ten days Shortland was careful to do nothing that could lead to excitement, but the Rough Alleys naturally presumed upon this forbearance, and grew more and more provocative and insubordinate.

On the arrival of the *Favourite* bearing the ratification of the treaty of Ghent on March 14th, the prisoners expected immediate release, and as the days passed without tidings from their Agent their indignation against Mr. Beasley reached boiling point. On the 25th an effigy was made and brought to

trial, and the following sentence was solemnly read over it as it sat propped against the railings.

“At this trial, held at Dartmoor on the 25th day of March, 1815, you, Reuben G. Beasley in effigy were found guilty by an impartial and judicious jury of your countrymen, upon the testimony of 5,700 witnesses, of depriving many hundreds of your countrymen of their lives by the most wanton and cruel deaths, by nakedness, starvation and exposure to pestilence. It therefore becomes the duty of this court, as ought to be the duty of every court of justice, to pronounce that sentence of the law which your manifold and heinous crimes so richly deserve. And it is with the deepest regret that I am compelled to say our country has been imposed upon by a man whose crimes must cut him off from among the living. You this day must be hanged by the neck on the top of prison No. 7 until you are dead ; your body is then to be taken down and fastened to a stake and burned to ashes, which are to be distributed to the winds, that your name may be forgotten and your crimes no longer disgrace our nation.”

The written confession beginning “Injured countrymen and fellow citizens,” which the effigy was supposed to have made on the scaffold, was then read to such as stayed to listen to it. The crimes which it pleaded guilty to were (1) neglecting to send the prisoners home in exchange before June, 1813 ; (2) depriving them of their turns by filling the cartels

with paroled officers who were not entitled to go ; (3) neglecting to obtain the release of men who surrendered themselves from British ships of war ; (4) contracting with a Jew merchant of London to supply them with clothing far below the value paid by the United States in order to enrich himself. Andrews gives this lengthy document *in extenso*, as he considered all his own compositions deserved, but the effigy meanwhile was going the round of the yards with a placard on its breast in a tempest of execrations which howled down the storm that was raging all that day. It was then run up to a lamp hook on No. 7 prison, where it hung for several hours in full view of the garrison. It was then stoned, torn down and kicked into the gutter, where it lay until the scavenger's cart came round and removed it.

Mr. Beasley received the news of these proceedings with pained surprise. He had in reality been working hard to charter vessels to convey the prisoners back to the United States, but as he had not been furnished by his Government either with funds or credit to make deposits on the charter parties he had great difficulty in engaging suitable ships. His fault lay in a fatal habit of leaving his letters unanswered, and as he knew, quite as well as the British Government, the turbulent and unruly character of the men over whose interests he was appointed to watch, his plaintive remonstrance is unconvincing.

A week of suspense passed by, and on March 31st tidings were received that the transports chartered for the prisoners were lying wind-bound in the Downs, and would sail for Plymouth with the first easterly breeze. The garrison might have shared the joy created in the prisoners by this news had they not learned two days before that Buonaparte had landed from Elba, and was even then marching upon Paris at the head of 300,000 men.

On the 3rd April notice was given that for the ration of bread hard biscuit of two-thirds the weight would be served out to relieve the contractor of the large stock which he was obliged to keep through the winter as a provision against severe weather when the roads were blocked by snow. The crier went through the buildings asking whether the prisoners were willing to accept biscuit merely to oblige the contractor, and as everyone refused, the cooks were ordered to demand the bread and to refuse the biscuit.

There were symptoms of riot very early the next morning. It happened unfortunately that Captain Shortland was absent in Plymouth for the day, leaving no one with authority to deal with an emergency during his absence. At eleven a noisy crowd had assembled at the gratings under the military walk, and began to use abusive language to the guard. One of them then climbed the picket fence with the intention of getting into the market



square. The sentries ordered him back, and, as he took no notice, the sentry on the military walk above, using the butt of his musket, dropped him on the pavement below. Whereupon the ruffian and two or three of his mates picked up stones, swarmed up the fence and actually drove the sentries from their posts. It was the opinion of the Greenhorn, who was present, that had these men been promptly arrested there might have been no more disturbance, but the military officers seemed afraid to act.

Seeing the temper of the prisoners the contractor had sent off messengers early in the day to bring up bread. The disorder grew worse as the pangs of hunger had time to work on the Rough Alleys, and at nightfall a large number refused to go into their prison for the night. The wilder spirits were openly boasting of how they would behave under fire, and were plainly determined to provoke the guard to a display of blank cartridge. At eight o'clock a howling mob was clamouring at the gate. Suddenly, at the shout of their watchword, "Keno!" they hurled themselves against the ponderous gate, which gave way, and there was an ugly rush for the storehouse at the top of the market square. Here the officers of the garrison met them, and in reply to their cry of "Give us our bread," promised that it should be issued that night if they would only go quietly back to their prison. Seeing their advantage in the evident panic of the garrison, the rowdies refused to

leave the square, but remained there for two hours, yelling and whooping at intervals. At ten o'clock the bread waggon rumbled through the gates and 9,000lbs. were distributed in the usual way ; the men then went quietly to their prison, and the gates were locked.

During the night a mounted messenger was despatched to Plymouth to inform Captain Shortland that the prisoners were in open revolt, which the garrison was powerless to control, and in the morning he returned at the head of a reinforcement of 200 men. He was surprised to find that all was quiet. Several prisoners who had taken advantage of the disturbance to scale the walls on the opposite side of the prison, and had spent the night wandering about the moor, came to the gate in the morning and demanded admission, having had time to reflect with empty stomachs upon the folly of forfeiting their free passage to America. Yet, though all this did not look like a combined resolve to mutiny, the panic in the neighbourhood of Princetown did not abate. The market people were convinced that a general rising was imminent because prisoners had boasted in their hearing that they would give Mr. Beasley a month from the date of the ratification, and if they were not then set free they would take their liberty in a body and abide by the consequences. Three weeks had now expired : the women and children had fled from all

the farms bordering on the moor into Tavistock and Plymouth for safety, and even the garrison shared the general panic. This must not be forgotten, since it had much to do with what followed. There can be no question that by allowing these men to force the gate, which might easily have been prevented if the guard had used their bayonets, the officer in command of the guard precipitated the terrible events of April 6th.

There are several conflicting accounts of the tragedy. The evidence of eye-witnesses of both sides given at the two public inquiries and at the inquest held immediately after the event is contradictory on important points, even when the witnesses were anxious to support one another by telling the same story. This must ever be the case with events of rapid and confused action when the witnesses were labouring under the stress of passion and of fear. We can only make a patient and dispassionate examination of all the documents, and construct out of them a connected narrative, not differing materially from the official report of the joint British and American Commission, and trust that we have arrived at the truth.

The 6th of April 1815 was a warm and sunny day, and during the afternoon so many of the prisoners were amusing themselves in the yards that the gamblers were obliged to move their tables out of doors or lose their customers. Among those

playing games were four of Commodore Chauncey's bargemen, who were playing a kind of fives against the cross wall that separated No. 7 yard from the guards' barrack (now the Hospital). Every time that their ball went over the wall it was thrown back by the sentry on the other side, but at last he turned sulky, and refused to throw it over. After trying persuasion in vain they said, "We'll come and get it if you don't," and he dared them to do it. Thereupon with such implements as they could pick up in the yard, they loosened the stones in the rubble wall, and, disregarding the remonstrance of members of the prison committee, they succeeded in making a hole large enough for a man to pass through. About the same time in another part of the prison, a number of Rough Alleys had scaled the picket fence, and were tearing up the turf between the fence and the boundary wall, pelting one another and skylarking. It was now six o'clock, and though the turnkey's horn had sounded for locking up the prisons, the yards, and particularly that in which the breach had been made, were more crowded than usual, the prisoners being always slow to go in on a fine evening.

At five minutes past six, word was brought to Captain Shortland that a man in the crowd of rowdies assembled at the main gate had broken the chain that secured it with an iron bar; that five

breaches<sup>1</sup> had been made in the boundary wall, one of which was opposite the building in which the reserve arms were kept. The officers were at dinner; the racks in the barrack building opposite the breach in the wall were full of the muskets of the soldiers off duty, and Captain Shortland jumped to the conclusion that the prisoners had chosen this favourable moment for making a combined attempt to seize the arms and overpower the garrison. He ordered the alarm bell to be sounded in order to call in all the garrison off duty, without considering that it would also have the effect of bringing all the prisoners who had retired into their prisons out into the yards. Partly from curiosity and partly because there was no other passage open to them, the prisoners crowded to the gate, which was now open, and several hundred of them ran into the market square, just as Captain Shortland, at the head of fifty men, entered the square from the upper gate. It is probable that not a single man had a thought of escaping, and the men who had broken into the market square were only Rough Alleys bent upon baiting the soldiers, as they had done on many previous occasions; but it was impossible for Shortland to know this, and the only inference which he could draw from their behaviour, and from the facts already reported to him from other parts of the prison, was that it was a concerted

<sup>1</sup> Only one hole was made.

rising. For some time both he and Dr. MacGrath, who was very popular with the prisoners, tried to persuade them to leave the market square, warning them of the serious consequences that would ensue if the soldiers were obliged to use force, but while some seemed inclined to obey, the pressure from behind was forcing others through the gate. About 100 men of the garrison, under Lieutenants Avelyne and Fortye and Ensign White, had now formed in a double line right across the square, and Captain Shortland, seeing that peaceful persuasion was to no purpose, ordered fifteen file who were directly opposite the gate, to charge the crowd with fixed bayonets. The soldiers were so close to the crowd that they could not bring their muskets properly down to the charge, and there was a good deal of pushing and scuffling, but the manœuvre was so far successful that all but a few of the most riotous, who still hung about the gate, were driven back into the passage under the military walk, which was densely packed with people, howling, hooting and daring the soldiers to fight. It is not certain whether they were actually throwing stones, as was stated by some of the witnesses, but their conduct was perfectly consistent with the belief of the garrison that they intended to break out of prison in a body.

Suddenly some one shouted the word "Fire!" and a number of muskets were discharged over the heads of the prisoners, the slugs and buckshot with

which they were charged rattling on the roofing-slates of the buildings. Immediately there was a shout of "Blank cartridges !" and the crowd surged forward with a volley of taunts and execrations. On this there was another discharge through the railing and several men fell, the rest taking to their heels. The action now became confused : Shortland and two of the officers ran in front of the soldiers trying to stop the firing. Lieutenant Fortye had succeeded in stopping his portion of the guard, but a number of soldiers, now quite out of hand, followed the rioters through the gate, shooting and bayoneting the hindmost. At the same instant the sentries, and a number of soldiers who joined them on the walls, opened a cross-fire on the crowds at the doors of the prisons. Only one door in each prison was kept open, and by these the turnkeys were standing in readiness to close the doors. One party of soldiers, irritated by stones thrown from the door of No. 3 prison, was firing into the entrance at close range ; in other parts of the yards the soldiers were purposely firing high, while the sentries on the walls were doing terrible execution. Some of the incidents in the yard amounted to wanton murder. A small boy, finding the rear door of No. 5 closed against him, took shelter in the recess till the firing had ceased, and then, while running at topmost speed for the other door, he received a bullet in the thigh from a sentry posted on the wall above ; but the case of John Washington

was even worse. By his natural talents and amiable disposition this man had acquired an influence with the prisoners, which he always used to allay irritation between the Americans and their English guards, and he was respected by both. He was actually trying to pacify his riotous fellow-countrymen when he was struck by a ball in one of the first volleys, and, falling by the wall, he propped himself against it as a party of soldiers ran past. Disregarding his cries for mercy, one of these miscreants shot him through the brain where he sat.

It happened that a private of the Somerset Militia was in the act of lighting the lamp at the gate of No. 5 prison when the firing began, and the prisoners rushing in for shelter carried him with them into the prison. In their fury they were for lynching him forthwith, but better counsels prevailed, and the man, who was half-fainting with terror, was pushed out of the gate as soon as it was opened to remove the wounded.

The whole affair was over in three minutes ; the prisoners were locked into their buildings, and the dead and wounded were carried to the hospital. Seven were killed ; six suffered amputation of a limb, of whom two died afterwards ; and fifty more were wounded by buckshot and slugs, making a total of sixty-three.

Those are the facts. In all the angry controversy, the inquest, the two inquiries, and the official reports



which followed, not a word was said upon the strange fact that British soldiers had fired upon persons who had ceased to be prisoners of war, and who were in the eye of the law citizens of a State with which England was at peace. Legally speaking, they were rioters, and the legal forms necessary before they could be fired upon had not been complied with. This is the more strange when we remember the ascendancy which legal form enjoyed at that time, since less than four months later H.M.S. *Northumberland* had to elude an attorney in a row-boat for fear he should serve a subpœna from the High Court upon Buonaparte, and so delay his removal to St. Helena.

Upon Shortland alone all the curses of the Americans have been heaped. "Shortland ! Thou foul monster and inhuman villain ! Is thy soul glutted with the blood of the innocent victims ? . . . Tell me, ye bloody butcher, how dare ye tread that earth which is wet with the blood of the innocent, shed by your accursed hands ?" and so forth. The chief controversy was about the question, Who gave the order to fire ? Shortland himself denied upon oath that he did so, and he is supported by all the English witnesses : moreover, he was standing in front of the muskets when the firing began, and he at once exerted himself to stop it. Collectively, the members of the Joint Commission acquitted him, but Charles King, the United States Commissioner, after-

wards wrote : " I yet confess myself unable to form any satisfactory conclusion, though, perhaps, the bias of my mind is that he did give such an order." Most of the American witnesses declared that they heard him shout the order, but there was so much noise and confusion, so much contradiction in the evidence of individuals that asserted it, that they may well have been mistaken. It may have been that in such unseasoned troops as the Somersetshire Militia the patience of the rank and file, so sorely tried by the insults of the Rough Alleys, gave way ; that a private shouted the order, and that the soldiers, now quite out of hand, felt themselves free to wipe out old scores.

If both sides had not been at cross purposes the affair would never have happened. It is quite clear from the report of the Commission that according to the usages of the time Shortland would have been held justified even by the better class of prisoners in ordering the first volley, if the prisoners had really been in revolt, as he had every reason for thinking ; but as they were not thinking of rising, and their insubordination was really the skylarking of unruly sailors, it was natural that they should think the whole affair a planned act of revenge for their past conduct. The firing in the yards was of course an outrage, but it was an outrage perpetrated by Somerset yokels with muskets in their hands.

To us at this distance of three generations it is

comforting to know that the British Government provided pensions for the wounded and for the families of the dead. In 1841 one of the wounded pensioners was still stumping on his wooden leg as gatekeeper of the Washington Medical College. So bitter were the passions excited among the Americans that it was generally believed that a number of bodies had been secretly removed by Captain Shortland's orders without Dr. MacGrath's knowledge in order to reduce the list of killed, and this and other ridiculous stories were afterwards published in America as ascertained facts. A story was current among the Americans that the soldiers who fired from the walls were smarting under a cheat practised on them a few nights earlier when certain prisoners had paid them with base coin for smuggling liquor into the prison, and knowing the penalty for smuggling they could make no complaint, and therefore they took this way of avenging themselves. There was certainly some rancour, but the insults they had lately endured at the hands of the Rough Alleys were quite enough to account for this.

Within the prisons no one slept that night. The doors of each building were opened about seven to remove the wounded to the hospital. When the doors were kept locked long after the usual hour in the morning the more timid supposed that preparations were being made for a fresh massacre.

Early on the 7th the prisoners hoisted the colours

at half-mast on every prison, and then spent the morning in preparing the depositions for the inquest. The sentries had all been withdrawn from the walls, and during the morning it was announced that the Somersetshire Militia had been withdrawn, and that a regiment from Plymouth had taken its place. The Commanding Officer soon appeared at the gate with Captain Shortland, and invited members of the prison committee to a conference. It was a painful interview, for the prisoners would hold no parley with Shortland. "I am sorry that it was done," he said, and later when his constraint was a little relieved, he explained the firing by saying that in the belief that there was an intention to rise and escape he had done no more than his duty. At two in the afternoon Admiral Sir John Duckworth, Commander-in-Chief in Plymouth, and Major-General Brown entered the prison, and after expressing their sympathy with the prisoners in a way that won their confidence and respect, informed them that they were empowered to hold a judicial inquiry into the affair, which they immediately proceeded to do. Their report exonerated Shortland personally, but it differed so materially from the accounts sent to London by the prisoners that ten days later Lord Castlereagh suggested the appointment of an international inquiry. Charles King was the American representative and Mr. Francis Seymour Larpent the British. They held their sittings partly in Plymouth

and partly on the spot. Their report is all that such a report should be, lucid, condensed, broad-minded and impartial ; while exonerating the prisoners from any intention to mutiny it declares that Captain Shortland was justified in his belief of their intentions, and could not be blamed for firing on them the first time, if he did give the order, but that for firing in the yards on unarmed prisoners there was no justification whatever. Unfortunately they failed in identifying any of the soldiers who continued the firing without orders, and there the matter had to rest. The verdict of the coroner's jury, composed of moor farmers in terror of a mutiny, was of course "Justifiable homicide." For a generation after the event the Americans were remembered locally for their turbulence and violence.

The Admiralty saw nothing in Captain Shortland's conduct to prejudice his career, which had already been brilliant. He had been promoted to the rank of Commander in 1798 for gallantry in cutting out the French brig *L'Avanturier*, when First Lieutenant of H.M.S. *Melpomene*, and soon after the closing of the War Prison, which he had administered with success under circumstances of great difficulty, he was appointed Captain of H.M.S. *Magnificent*. When she was paid off he became Commissioner of Port Royal Dockyard in Jamaica, where he died of yellow fever in 1825.

## CHAPTER XVII

AFTER the terrible occurrences of April 6th the prisoners were left very much to themselves. Captain Shortland remained in command, but he was determined that there should be no opportunity for a collision between the garrison and the prisoners. Profound depression had settled on the prisoners as day followed day without any news of their release. The painters and sculptors busied themselves with pictures and mementoes of the massacre, for which they found a ready sale in the market.

On April 19, six weeks after the ratification of peace a cartel reached Plymouth, and the first draft of 249 men prepared to march out, a baggage waggon being allowed for every hundred men. On the following morning they hoisted a large white banner on which was painted a tomb with the Goddess of Liberty weeping over it and a murdered sailor at her feet, and over all the superscription "Columbia weeps and we remember." It was popularly referred to among the prisoners as the "Rawhead-and-bloody-bone" Standard. At Captain Shortland's door a strong guard was posted : he had sent his family

away and was prepared for reprisals ; but the detachment was in no mood for that. The men set off cheering loudly as a parting salute to their 5,000 messmates, whose response was borne faintly to them as they marched down the village.

A week later the second draft of 350 were called. They were already moving off when they discovered that their escort belonged to the hated Somersetshire Militia, and they refused to budge, saying that they would rather go back to prison than risk their lives with such cut-throats. Fearing a collision on the march the officer in command sent to Dousland for a fresh detachment, and not until it arrived would the prisoners move from the gate.

So indifferent to the security of the prisoners had the garrison become, that numbers were allowed to escape over the walls.<sup>1</sup> They made their way to Plymouth, and putting themselves under the protection of the American Agent there, were given passages in the cartel with the rest. To prevent this the Agent sent notice to the prisoners that he would receive no more that came out before their turn, but notwithstanding this no less than seventy-eight escaped between Sunday night and Thursday—eleven scaling the wall in broad day with their baggage, in full view of the sentries, who looked on abstractedly. But a summary end was put to the practice from an unexpected quarter. There was

<sup>1</sup> Up to this time 23 Americans had escaped.

a hot press in Plymouth to man ships for service against Buonaparte lately escaped from Elba ; and several of the escaped prisoners on being pressed and claiming the protection of their nationality, were sent back to the prison there to remain until the last draft. After this there were no more escapes.

The impersonation of men who were known to have escaped was rife. In order to travel in the same cartel as his messmates the Greenhorn had been carefully coached in the proper replies to the clerk's questions when he should call the name of one of these absentees higher in the list than he, and he would doubtless have succeeded had not another man, who also answered to the description, the same design. When the name was called his rival got first to the gate and the poor Greenhorn had sadly to unpack his hammock again and settle down to imprisonment with such philosophy as he could muster. For us this was fortunate, for without him we should know nothing of the last days of the war prison.

As the days wore on all industries came to a standstill for want of money. Such money as remained in the prison after the stoppage of the monthly allowance had gradually leaked away into the market in payment for provisions, and even the gaming tables were idle for want of customers. The market people ceased from coming to a mart where the customers had no money, and the prisoners soon had nothing to eat



but their Government rations, which were insufficient to stay their stomachs. It was very curious to watch the different effects of hunger. Some grew quarrelsome and morose ; others fell into a sort of lethargy ; others again were seized with fits of causeless passion, when they would stride up and down with staring eyes and turn savagely upon their best friends. But the sudden deprivation of tobacco was a very serious matter to those who were addicted to chewing. As it grew scarcer, they would wind the last quid with thread and "do a day upon it," fast a day while it was drying, and on the third smoke it. When the weed gave out they would chew tarred rope, or a piece of wood, but the favourite substitute was the lining of a pocket that had held tobacco, or the sole of an old shoe. Then the tongue would swell and protrude from the mouth, and the man would sell three-quarters of his rations for a few crumbs of the weed. There were some who were taken to the hospital and there died, from no disease, if the surgeon spoke the truth, but merely from the shock of the sudden deprivation.

The prisoners suffered more during this period than at any other in the history of the prison. It was the uncertainty that told upon them, and it was no hyperbole when some of them said that they would rather hear that war was declared anew than linger on in this suspense. Seeing the nervous irritation from which all were suffering, Sodom and Gomorrah

chose an ill moment for committing the unpardonable sin of stealing a comrade's bedding. The man who could not produce his full kit on the morning of his release lost his turn for the cartel, and the crime was rare even among the worst of the Rough Alleys, not indeed from any vestige of good feeling, but from fear of the signal penalty which was invariably awarded. There were many of these men who might have gone out with the first cartels had they not sold their birth-rights not only for their own turns but for that which they had acquired in exchange. And then, to satisfy some animal appetite they had sold their "King's kit," and there remained nothing for them but to steal another or remain in prison until the last draft.

At ten o'clock at night on June 27th a large draft was ordered to be ready to march out at daybreak. All was bustle and confusion when suddenly two of the men missed their "King's kits." There was a tremendous uproar ; lights were brought, and every corner of the prisons turned out. At length, after an hour's search the missing hammocks were found in the possession of Sodom and Gomorrah, who were known to have had no bedding of their own for months. There was no time for a proper trial, and the affair came perilously near lynching. Not one of the Rough Alley gang came forward in defence of their chiefs ; some stood apart in terror lest the retribution might extend to them ; some, to divert the attention of the law-abiding, were foremost in condemning them.

They were immediately stripped and triced up between two stanchions by their thumbs so that they could barely rest upon their feet. Then the crier went through the prison calling upon all who had accounts to settle to come and take payment from the "greatest thieves in Christendom." No count was kept of the number of dozens these men received while they were hanging from their thumbs, but every man who had lost anything from the clothes line which could reasonably be laid at the door of this precious pair, handled the cat-o'-nine-tails in his turn. They had had more than enough when they were cut down ; they slunk away to their own lair and troubled the law-abiding no more.

At the beginning of July 900 still remained, of whom half were negroes. Most of the blacks would have gone out long before, but whenever they found that their cartel was bound for a southern port, they would not answer to their names, for fear of being sold as slaves to the highest bidder as soon as they arrived. The remaining 900 were now ordered to No 4 to make room for the French prisoners now on their way back to England from the battle-fields of the Hundred Days. The white men suffered by the change. The building swarmed with fleas. Now that Big Dick had gone out in his turn there was no one to keep order ; the blacks were in a majority, and regarding themselves as proprietors, resented and ignored any sanitary

regulations agreed to by the whites in the common interest, and set their faces against the observance of Sunday. A zealous preacher, who had obtained leave to hold a service there on the first Sunday in July, found within a radius of twenty feet from his pulpit a keno table, three card parties, a gang playing at pitch-penny in the alley, three violins and two or three slop-sellers all in full blast—in fact they were timing the shouts proper to their occupation to make a stentorian echo to the preacher's most emphatic periods. The sermon was never finished, the preacher remarking that he could not hear his own voice in such a din, and that he would not come again until the blacks were kept in better order.

During the first four days of July 4,000 French prisoners were marched up from Plymouth. They had been taken at Ligny and so quickly had they been conveyed that their wounds were still undressed, and their uniforms caked with the blood from sabre cuts still unhealed. Many were without their helmets. Their uniforms were torn to rags, yet they were as lively and cheerful as schoolboys let loose for the holidays. The majority were mere boys, though there were some who had only quitted the prison a few months before, and these, with pathetic foresight, had collected while on the march, sticks, pieces of wood, rotten branches, strands of yarn and all kinds of rubbish of incal-

culable value to them as hammock-stretchers, clothes pins, and material for making toys for sale in the market. So easy were they to manage in comparison with the Americans that 2,500 marched up from Plymouth in as compact a body as if they were under the eye of the Emperor, with a guard of no more than 300 Militia, whereas for every American prisoner on the march an armed soldier was required as escort.

The Americans were allowed to converse with them through the grating until Parker, the turnkey, saw that they were giving them the furniture and cooking utensils which he intended to take and sell to the French as soon as the owners were gone, as he had done with the property of the French released after the peace of Amiens. Thereupon he forbade any intercourse, and the Americans in revenge improvised a platform against the dividing wall, and mounting upon it, handed over to the French tables, benches, kettles, stoves and plates. For half an hour utensils of all sorts rained upon the French, who were dancing and singing with delight on the other side of the wall, and dodging the occasional brickbats which were interspersed with all this wealth, while Parker glowered on the scene from his perch on the military walk. The Americans, in the joy of their coming release, felt a generous sympathy with these poor wretches, doomed to a fresh imprisonment for an unknown period, but in

the end it was the French who reached their homes first, for Buonaparte, though they did not know it, was already on his way to Plymouth in the *Bellerophon*.

A few brave spirits tried to organise a procession for the Fourth of July, but it fizzled out like a damp squib, and they never got to speechmaking. The Greenhorn climbed the picket fence with the approval of the sentry, and when conversation with him became a burden, he went to sleep on the grass under the shade of the boundary wall. A shout from the prison awoke him. His cartel had arrived at last. At daybreak his draft left Dartmoor carrying a standard inscribed in conspicuous characters "Shortland the murderer." The wicket in the French gate was so low that it was necessary to stoop to pass through, and while in this position he received a tremendous kick from the turnkey, Parker, who had never forgiven the part he took in giving away the perquisites of his office to the French. So that in the end he was kicked out of prison—a joke that his messmates did not allow him to forget. On the march to Plymouth the soldiers fraternised with their prisoners to such good purpose that after a halt at Roborough Inn, where the beer ran free, they were fain to give their muskets and belts to the prisoners to carry. The talk ran high upon naval actions with the French, wherein quite half the prisoners had been fighting as

impressed seamen on the English side, and nothing showed the absurdity of the American war better than the immense pride taken by these prisoners of war in the exploits of the British Navy as long as it was engaged against the French. His men being still too unsteady in their gait to do him any credit the officer in charge of the escort chose a circuitous route in order to avoid the principal streets of Plymouth. As they passed through the suburbs congratulations and handshakes were showered upon them from the crowds that turned out to see them pass.

Two more cartels, the last filled with negroes and Rough Alleys, and No. 4 was left empty but for its fleas. Buonaparte lay in Plymouth Harbour from July 26th until August 8th, and as soon as he had started on the last voyage he was to take alive, the French prisoners were again on the march to Plymouth. By February, 1816, the last of the sick had been moved from the hospital ; the garrison had marched away with its baggage wagons, the Admiralty stores were removed, the gates were locked, and the great buildings, like empty hives, were left to rot and crumble on the moor.

## CHAPTER XVIII

As soon as the bolts were shot in the great gate of the prison, the population of Princetown began to melt away. The brief prosperity that had warmed the heart of Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt was over, for none of the villagers that he had gathered together with so much labour, were convinced of the agricultural possibilities of the moor land. But Sir Thomas was an incurable optimist. It happened that a Committee of the House of Commons was then investigating the state of the prisons of the Metropolis, and whether he suggested it to the Committee, or the Committee anticipated his suggestion, it is certain that the report included a paragraph extolling the climate of Dartmoor, and proposing that 2,000 convicts should be removed from London to the War prison at an estimated cost of £5,000 for the necessary alterations. Two sentences in the report certainly point to the hand of Sir Thomas Tyrwhitt: the Commissioners remark that the cutting of the granite by convicts would "cleanse the land and render it fit for cultivation," and that an iron railway might convey it to Plymouth.



The paper written by Tyrwhitt to the Chamber of Commerce at Plymouth on November 3rd, 1818, in favour of constructing a railroad from Princetown to Plymouth quotes this report as a justification for the proposed expense. Tyrwhitt was a skilful wire puller, and if he was not quite ingenuous in the advocacy of his pet scheme, it must not be accounted to him for unrighteousness. If he had lived to see the convict prison of to-day with its extensive farm, its thriving manufactures, and a steam railway running several trains a day, he would have felt that his dream was realised, even though the fields of flax and the cloth and linen mills about which he built with his facile pen have vanished into thin air.

The House of Commons did not adopt the recommendation of its Committee, but at a public meeting held in London in 1820 it was announced that King George IV. had subscribed £1,000 and the necessary land for removing orphan children from the streets of London to the late war prison at Dartmoor "under a system of religious, moral and industrial training to reclaim them from the habits of vice and immorality," but the scheme languished, and the old prison began to fall into decay.

By means of three Acts of Parliament, and the floating of loans, Exchequer bills, and a large public subscription, Tyrwhitt's railway, or horse tramway as it would now be called, was completed at a cost of £66,000. It was opened on September 26th, 1823,

by the passage of a gaily decorated train and by a public luncheon at Princetown, at which the language of optimism ran riot. The railway was to carry a stream of merchandise to and from the moor, and "dilate the benevolent heart of the patriot"; what it did was to carry granite from the Foggin Tor Quarries, but it did nothing to retrieve the lost fortunes of Princetown. The church was locked up, rank nettles filled the churchyard, grass was sprouting in the village street, cottages were tumbling into ruin, and in the prison itself the yards were thick with weeds and grass. Rabbits burrowed in the walls, rats scampered about the ruinous floors. There seems always to have been a caretaker for the prison. On the leadwork of the roof of No. 2 prison were scratched the words "Robert Nott, September 16th, 1825"; probably by a workman employed to stop a hole in the roof.

From time to time the idea of peopling the buildings with convicts was revived, but transportation had not then broken down, and the Government would not incur the expense and risk of a new experiment.

Between 1831 and 1841 there was a great revival of the granite industry. Quarrymen spread over the country about Princetown, cutting surface stone for sale to the quarries, and large numbers of them lodged in the barracks and cottages, paying rent to the Duchy at the rate of 2s. 6d. to 4s. a fortnight,

according to the size of the rooms. We have two pictures of the place in the early 'forties. "Vainly," wrote the author of a pamphlet printed at Chudleigh, "could one have attempted to picture a more dreary place. . . . The soil is stony without grass and swampy without rills of water. And then, those dark, high walls and small but closely barred windows, and the deserted village of Prince's Town close by, with its falling houses, its closed inn, its mean-looking church! It seemed an unhonoured and unfrequented spot. Never did I behold a scene of such utter desolation."

Miss Rachel Evans, who visited the place in 1846, is a little more cheerful. She was taken round the prison by the Irish caretaker, one Walter Willcox, who showed her a number of French inscriptions in a house near the gate which has since disappeared, and bullet holes said to have been made during the massacre on April 6th, 1815. "The hospital," she said, "did not seem in respect to its proportions, to be unsuited to the palace of a prince. . . . The kitchen and laundries are well contrived, and the dungeon is far preferable to any place of confinement which our own prisons can afford, but the walls are so thick that the instrument of release could never pierce them. The light comes dimly through a small iron grating, and the doubly bolted door closes with a thundering reverberation that rings through the vaulted cells." The Duchy had already begun repairs to save the

woodwork, for some of the floors had entirely fallen in.

Up to this time the Duchy had had no resident steward, and there was reason to think that its rights were being encroached upon. In 1846 the "British Patent Naphtha Company" applied for a lease of land and premises to produce naphtha and other chemical products from the peat, and in that year Mr C. Barrington was appointed as Resident High Steward to protect the interests of the landlord. The house now occupied by the deputy-governor was made ready for his occupation, and it was long known as the "Duchy House." The Naphtha Company was granted the use of the old war prison infirmary as a retort house, and by April, 1847, they had saved 8,200 tons of peat. They had a tramway leading from beyond Fice's wall into the prison, crossing the boundary wall by a high trestle bridge. The slopes about the head water of the Blackbrook are still heavily scored by the operations, and the removal of the peat, which formerly held the water and delivered it slowly like a sponge, has resulted in a rapid flood in times of rain and a drought in dry weather. But there was little return for the capital expended. The naphtha was smoky and almost unsaleable, and after lingering for a few years the Company went into liquidation.

All this time Mr. Barrington was improving the property. Fences were repaired ; the cattle were ex-

cluded from the field in which the bones of the war prisoners lay whitening in the sun ; quantities of lead and iron which would never again be wanted were sold ; rents were regularly collected from the tenants of the barracks, who were placed under the iron hand of an old sergeant, one John Ledger, who on an occasion still famous in local tradition upheld his authority by threatening to shoot a mutinous tenant with a long gun. He was afterwards landlord of "The Plume of Feathers." Ever since 1836 it had been known that sooner or later the Government must apply for a lease of the buildings, and it was with this object that the Duchy was expending money in keeping the buildings from falling into absolute ruin.

## CHAPTER XIX

PRINCETOWN CHURCH, or Dartmoor Chapel, as it was then called, was built by the prisoners in 1810-15. In accordance with the system already described, masons were paid sixpence a day, it being understood that the money should accumulate, and that if any of the workmen should escape, the whole of the pay due to the gang should be forfeited. By this means every prisoner was made a warder over his fellows. When the French were discharged at the peace of Amiens, Americans took their places on the same terms, but there was little left for them to do except the fitting of the interior, and before they took over the work occasional services were held in the church by the Rev. J. H. Mason, who held his first service on January 2nd, 1814. The faculty for the burial ground was granted on November 1st, 1815, and the first burial took place on November 19th, when William Shillingford, of Dartmoor Barracks, was buried. The last of the war prisoners left Princetown on February 10th, 1816, and the church was then locked up, though burials were continued in the churchyard. The peal of bells

which were destined for the tower reached Plymouth after the Peace, and were diverted to the dockyard chapel, where they still are.

The first burial of a convict in the churchyard was on May 31st, 1851, and thereafter a portion of the ground on the South side of the churchyard was set aside for convicts. Until the year 1902 their graves were not marked unless the relations chose to put up a headstone, and in only one case was this done. Since 1902, however, small granite headstones have been erected by the Prison Commissioners, bearing the initials of the convict buried there and the date. The solitary tombstone erected by the friends of the dead is suggestive enough, bearing as it does the simple initials "A. L. M." and the words "Jesus Mercy."

Until the year 1860 services seem to have been performed in the church at irregular intervals by the Prison Chaplain, but on April 23rd, after some necessary repairs, it was constituted a separate Ecclesiastical Chapel under the Rev. Mr. Drake. One of the conditions under which the Directors of Convict Prisons consented to carry out the repairs, and to contribute towards the stipend of the incumbent was that half the seats should be allotted to the families of prison officers, but the allotment caused a great deal of friction, and it is recorded that on October 18th, 1860, the Duchy Steward tore down a notice of the allotment which the Governor

had had posted on the church door. On Sunday, March 8th, 1868, a fire broke out during morning service. All the officers off duty were sent down with the manual engine, and after two hours' work the fabric of the church was saved, though the interior was entirely gutted. The churchwardens now set to work to collect money for the restoration, which was not, however, carried out until the year 1875. The Rector of Lydford had an unfortunate practice of giving orders to the builders without consulting his churchwardens, who after expostulation had failed, resigned and left the Rector to meet the extra liabilities he had incurred out of his own pocket. It was from this time that the Directors of Convict Prisons paid the stipend of the incumbent on the condition that he should perform the chaplain's duty in the prison when required.

In 1897 a fund was again collected for restoring the church and adding a side aisle. The work was scandalously mismanaged, and owing to the use of inferior materials and bad workmanship, it was discovered in 1905 that the east wall was in danger of collapsing. The work has now to be done again. These imperfect restorations were completed early in 1901, and the church was reconsecrated by the Bishop of Exeter on August 21st of that year.



## CHAPTER XX

THE history of Dartmoor as a convict prison is the history of the modern system of penal servitude. Up to the year 1849 England disposed of her convicts either by executing them or by transporting them beyond the seas. Though prisons have existed ever since the Plantagenets, it was not until the reign of George IV. that they were used as places of detention. The law punished the graver crimes with death ; the less heinous with the pillory, the branding iron and the lash.

Sir Samuel Romilly's declaration that the criminal law of England was written in blood was true only of the criminal law after the Revolution, for in the reign of Edward VI. only five crimes—treason, murder, robbery, arson, and horse-stealing—were punished with death. Rape was not a capital offence until the reign of Elizabeth ; forgery was only a misdemeanour, and, until the reign of George II., the theft of bank notes or other paper instruments was not a criminal offence. Even in the reign of George IV. it was not a crime to steal children or to steal or damage growing crops.

The severity of the law increased with the growth of population and wealth, without a corresponding improvement in police. It was futile to pass statute after statute providing a death penalty for new crimes when nine out of every ten offenders went unpunished. In 1819, when the public conscience began to revolt against our sanguinary code, a great lawyer actually quoted the frequent acquittal of guilty persons through technical flaws in the indictment as a proof of the humanity of the law as it then stood, instead of boldly justifying its severity upon the fact that life and property had never been so insecure. At that time no prudent household in the country went to bed without having alarm bells, watchdogs and loaded pistols in the house; no traveller who used the highways could boast that he had never been stopped by highwayman or footpad; the plunder of shipping in the Thames before 1798 was estimated at half a million sterling annually; from forty to fifty private mints of false coin were always at work; whole districts in London were inhabited only by criminals. An officer of the Honourable Artillery Company, which was occasionally called upon to assist the Bow Street runners, thus describes Chick Lane, Field Lane, and Black Boy Alley.

“The buildings in these parts constitute a sort of distinct town. . . The houses are divided from top to bottom into many apartments, with doors of

communication between them all, and also with the adjacent houses ; some have two, others three, nay, four doors opening into different alleys. . . The peace officers and the keepers of these houses were well acquainted with each other, and on much better terms than is compatible with the distinction between honesty and roguery."

The night watch established in 1737 at the expense of the ratepayers and the runners and constables attached to the courts brought to justice only those who had offended them, or those whose arrest would bring them profit. It did not occur to the reformers of that time that a strong central body of police under the control of the Government would solve the problem, although Fielding's experiment of a mounted patrol on the main coach roads had been so successful in putting down highwaymen, and the best expedient that could be suggested was a system of bell wires carried from house to house under the street, to be called "reciprocal," whereby every householder was to be constituted a constable for his neighbours.

Against this growing danger, society in the eighteenth century could devise no defence but terrorising criminals into good behaviour by public executions, forgetting that while capital punishment reduced the number of its enemies, the knowledge that for sheepstealing the penalty was the same as for murder was likely to increase rather than to diminish

the graver kinds of crime. As early as the thirteenth century Sir Thomas More had questioned the wisdom, as two centuries later Oliver Goldsmith questioned the moral justice, of hanging men for theft, but the real difficulty was how to dispose of the convicted felon. The Spanish custom of allowing condemned persons to choose slavery in the plantations, which had been adopted late in Elizabeth's reign, was expensive, and it fell naturally into disuse after the revolt of the American colonies.

Though quite nine persons out of ten escaped arrest, the number of public executions at the end of the eighteenth century was astounding. In 1787 the number hanged in London alone was 100 out of 123 capital convictions, which, taking the population to have been 700,000, meant that out of every 7,000 Londoners one was hanged every year.

Transportations really began with the Vagrancy Act of Queen Elizabeth, which empowered the magistrates in quarter sessions to order offenders to be transported beyond the seas to such places as should be assigned by the Privy Council. A letter of James I., written in 1619, directs that 100 dissolute persons should be sent to Virginia, and in an Act of Charles II. the term "transportation" was first used. In 1718 it was first made legal to hand over persons who had escaped the death penalty to contractors who undertook to transport them to the American colonies for servitude for terms not exceeding

fourteen years, but the contractors usually sold their rights to the colonists. So great was the demand for labour that a system of kidnapping innocent persons sprang up.

The revolt of the American colonies put a summary end to the system ; and the Government of the day, at the instance of John Howard, prepared plans for building penitentiaries, which were to be conducted on the lines of a modern convict prison. In the meantime the prisoners were lodged in hulks, and it was owing to the horrors of these floating hells that the idea of transportation seized the official imagination as soon as the discoveries of Captain Cook opened a new field. The "First Fleet," consisting of two frigates and nine transports, anchored in Botany Bay in January, 1788, and founded the Australian colonies. For the next forty years people in England thought that the problem had been solved. Reformers were content to watch the experiment of reclaiming a few selected cases at Millbank, and kept their denunciation for capital punishment, which, by the way, had come to be rarely inflicted for any crime but murder, so frequent were the pardons and so many the loopholes for escape ; and the Committee of the House of Commons, while condemning the hulks, reported transportation to be "a most valuable expedient in the system of secondary punishment." And so indeed, it was, in so far as it thinned the ranks of

professional criminals at home, and gave the accidental offender a chance of making a fresh start in life. No one seemed to reflect upon the influence which the tales of fortunes made in Australia by convicts must have upon the class from which criminals were recruited, nor upon the small return received by the State for an annual expenditure of half a million sterling.

The protest came from Australia herself. Her society was so leavened with criminality that convict opinion regulated public morality, controlled a Press of its own, and showed a sympathetic indulgence towards crimes committed in the colony. While a few ex-convicts had amassed fortunes, fugitives from the road gangs terrorised the country as bushrangers, and men were committing murder in Norfolk Island only to escape by the rope from the severity of penal discipline.

In 1835 the storm broke, and the Home Government had to bow before it. The system was condemned by the Parliamentary Committee of that year, and in 1840 transportation to New South Wales came to an end. But what was to be done with the convicts? Millbank had been a costly failure; Pentonville was still in the hands of the builders. Tasmania had received convicts without protest, and to Tasmania the whole stream was now directed under a new name—the Probation System.

The scheme was admirable on paper. All convicts were to be classified according to their characters, and, after a period of probation, either in hulks or in an English prison, they were sent to Probation Stations in Tasmania, where habits of industry and obedience were to be inculcated. The next stage was liberation with a pass to seek employment for themselves, and the last a ticket-of-leave. But in the first four years 16,000 convicts were sent out, and the scheme broke down. Under the noses of a staff of chaplains and supervisors at the Probation Stations many things altogether opposed to industry and obedience were inculcated. A sparse population of farmers could not absorb the host of freed convicts who demanded employment, for they formed nearly half the total population of the colony. Trade was at a standstill; the colony was on the verge of bankruptcy; and the Government had half the free convicts on its hands. In 1846 transportation was suspended for two years in the hope that some new outlet would be suggested.

The Government now resolved to hire all the available prison accommodation in England, and to reserve transportation for the ticket-of-leave men. But now every colony, except Western Australia, refused to receive them. The appearance of a convict ship in Table Bay nearly caused a revolt in Cape Colony. There was nothing left for the

Mother Country but to consume her own smoke, and the Penal Servitude Act of 1853 shortened sentences and allowed convicts to serve out their tickets-of-leave in their own country.

In the sudden demand for new prisons hulks were established at Gibraltar and Bermuda ; Pentonville and Millbank were overflowing, and yet the criminal courts continued to pour forth a steady stream of convicts for whom there was no accommodation. The distracted Government was ready to take over any building that could be adapted to "receive prisoners, and the time arrived for re-peopling the silent and ruinous buildings of the old War Prison at Dartmoor.

The vague projects for adapting the buildings for convicts had taken shape in 1836, when a definite plan was laid before Lord John Russell to convert them into a prison for 700 juveniles, but as the estimated expense amounted to £72,659 the scheme was abandoned in favour of the Albany Barracks at Parkhurst. But in 1837 Colonel Jebb, the Surveyor-General of Prisons, inspected the buildings and reported favourably on them as a prison for adults sentenced to long terms, who could be profitably employed on the land and in the quarries. Nothing was done at that time, but after the failure of the British Patent Naphtha Company, the Duchy of Cornwall offered the Government a lease of the



buildings. At that time there had accumulated in the *Defence* hulk at Portsmouth and in the barracks at Shorncliffe nearly 700 invalid convicts, who were disqualified by age or infirmity from earning a livelihood in the colonies, and for these the War Prison, with its wide area available for vegetable gardens both within and without the walls, seemed peculiarly well-suited.

In September, 1850, No. 3 prison was repaired by free labourers to receive a small body of convict artificers, and the present infirmary was got ready for the warders and the military guard. On November 1st a detachment of the Fourth Regiment under Ensign Hall marched into Princetown, and on the following day was dispatched to the Hill Quarries to meet 59 convicts from Millbank under the escort of eight warders, and Mr. Morrish, the deputy-governor. Twelve days later, Captain Gambier, the governor, arrived with 95 convicts, and the work of conversion was pushed on with great energy. The ruined leat, which conveyed the water from the Walkham was examined and repaired ; free plumbers laid pipes to convey the water from the reservoir into the prison. There was some difficulty in acquiring possession of all the buildings, for a Mr. Gardiner, who rented the buildings on the north side on behalf of the Naphtha Company refused to give up possession till Lady Day, and the families

who rented the barracks resented eviction. But the work proceeded so rapidly on the south side that by the end of December five buildings, beginning with the infirmary, were nearly ready for permanent occupation. These were to accommodate 1,300 prisoners. The numbering of the buildings was now reversed. The old petty officers' prison was called No. 1, No. 7 prison became No. 2, and so on. Nos. 1 and 3 were fitted up as open dormitories with hospital beds and hammocks to hold 700 invalids; Nos. 2 and 4 were gutted, and instead of the floors four tiers of little corrugated iron cells, placed back to back with slate landings in front of them were erected, with a wide alley between the cells and the walls of the building after the plan adopted at Portland. Hot water pipes laid under the floors supplied the necessary heat. The cells were mere cubicles, dark and inconveniently small. The building of modern stone cells to take their place has been in progress for the past forty years, and the last of the iron cells will be demolished in 1908. Nevertheless they are preferred by a certain class of convict because they are warmer than the stone cells, there is less in them to keep clean and whitewashed, and the iron partitions permit some measure of intercourse with the neighbours on either side. Except on Sundays and Saturday afternoons the men are only in them for eating and sleeping.

The staff in 1850 seems curiously inadequate for what is now considered necessary for convicts.<sup>1</sup> It consisted of :

The Governor.

The Deputy Governor

2 Principal Warders.

6 Warders.

8 Assistant Warders.

1 Gate-Porter.

1 Infirmary Warder.

1 Steward's Porter.

1 Steward.

1 Schoolmaster (for the education of convicts was regularly carried on in 1850).

1 Clerk.

1 Engineer.

1 Cook.

The military guard was the force in reserve. The Rev. J. H. Mason conducted service on Sundays, and Messrs. Pearce and Northey, of Tavistock, attended to the sick at 10s. a visit.

The military guard consisted of a captain, two lieutenants, four sergeants, five corporals, one drummer, and 70 privates—83 in all, which is nearly twice the armed guard now found to be necessary.

<sup>1</sup> The present Staff numbers about 230 of all ranks.

The notorious No. 4 prison, which had been successively tenanted by the "Romans," the negroes, and the gang of Sodom and Gomorrah, was divided—the upper end being converted into a kitchen and bakehouse, and the lower into a chapel. If walls had tongues as well as ears, and could repeat what they had listened to a century ago, their utterances would be disturbing to the congregation.

The cost of these repairs amounted to £26,000, or about £20 a head for the 1,300 convicts provided for, and it was estimated that the three remaining buildings on the north side could be prepared to receive 700 men, for about £15 a head, if it should be decided to raise the accommodation to 2,000. In the panic that followed the abolition of transportation to the colonies it was calculated that 28,000 additional cells would be required. Only 8,900 were provided and yet, from 1850 to 1860 there were nearly 1,000 vacancies. The number of convictions for serious crime was in fact steadily decreasing throughout the decade, although all the convicts were liberated in England, and from 12 to 14 per cent. were reconvicted.

The lot of convict artificers at Dartmoor during the period of reconstruction was not altogether cheerless, if we may judge from an inscription that came to light in the demolition of No. 2 prison in 1905. On one of the window-sills near the roof a

piece of iron had lain undisturbed for 54 years, and on its under side the following inscription had been lettered in white paint :

“J. Wallace, 7 years—1849,  
from

Newcastle-on-Tyne.

No Baccy O Dear,

1851.

Hurra for Dartmoor and Cpt. Gambier.”

“No baccy, Oh dear !” was a cry from the heart then as it is now and as it was when the daily allowance to the American prisoners was suddenly cut off.

## CHAPTER XXI

THE routine of life in a convict prison is so monotonous, and history repeats itself with such unfailing regularity that a connected story is impossible. Figures flash for a moment across the disc of vision like the moving figures in a cinematograph, and the only possible way of recording the history of the past fifty years is by noting the principal occurrences in the form of a diary.

The first escape took place on December 10th, 1850. On taking the roll of D ward in the Infirmary between six and seven in the morning Warder Jameson found that three men—John Brodrick, John Thompson and Charles Webster—were absent. They had ripped up the floor of the ward and got into the basement, where the tools were stored: there they forced a door and scaled a boundary wall by means of a scaffold plank. Descriptions of the missing men were circulated among the police of all the neighbouring towns and villages, and four days later a constable arrested Thompson in Ashburton. Another constable met Brodrick and Webster on the London road a mile out of the town, and seized the former,

but Webster took to his heels and was never recaptured. The two others gave a graphic account of their adventures. They had made straight for Plymouth, and had passed through the streets in the night, encountering three policemen who took no notice of them. At last they came to a toll bar, and had to turn back because they could not pay the halfpenny demanded by the toll-keeper. Next day, being in the open country, they begged from people whom they met, but got nothing except a little milk given to them at a farmhouse. That evening they saw their pursuers for the first time, and they spent a miserable night in a swamp. The other nights were spent in comparative comfort in hayricks, but they were almost starving when they were arrested. Two of the night warders were dismissed and the two men transferred to other prisons.

On February 17th, 1851, Gordon Taylor, a convict employed as a painter in the barracks, slipped away unnoticed by the principal warder, until news was brought in that he had been seen scudding across the moor. He was recaptured by the Plymouth police, and sentenced to be transported to Bermuda.

Escapes now became frequent, and the practice of transferring those who were recaptured to other prisons was abandoned. On the last occasion the Governor of Millbank refused to receive two who had thus been transferred without a warrant, and they were brought back to Dartmoor. John Cotton

and John Jones, who ran away late in the afternoon of April 15th, 1851, waylaid and robbed a man at Moreton on the 19th and were never recaptured. John Bell, who was allowed to run from the Vicarage, where he was employed in repairing, was caught at Exeter ; J. Hartley, who slipped away unnoticed from his party on August 22nd, was caught by Farmer Dodd of Whitchurch hiding in his buildings, and a reward of £5 was paid. But the most remarkable escape of the year was that of Thomas Clutch, a man so small and spare that he actually succeeded in squeezing through the bars of the window on the ground floor of No. 3 prison. The bars are still there, and one may judge from them how marvellous was this feat. Waiting until the sentry turned on his beat, he ran for the boundary wall, which was in sore need of repointing, and scaled it by digging his fingers and toes into the interstices between the stones.

The curiosity excited by the convict prison was responsible for one escape. During the summer a mob of from 300 to 400 people used to assemble at the entrance gate to see the men march out to labour, and on August 28th they completely blocked the road, preventing the military guard from entering the prison. While the soldiers were employed in forcing the crowd back from the gate instead of in patrolling the boundary wall, two convicts, named Baker and Griffiths, seized upon the opportunity to



run from the parade down the Octagon passage and through the chapel to a defective part of the wall where the pigs were kept. They were recaptured at South Tawton the same evening and lodged in the refractory cells, from which they made a second escape three months later, this time in the direction of Plymouth, where they were caught by the police.

Escapes had become so frequent that a new policy was adopted, and on December 15th, when William French, who had walked out of the gate disguised in the clothes supplied to him by a civilian workman, was brought back by the police from Newton Abbot the governor refused to receive him, and directed them to prosecute him for prison-breaking.

On January 8th, 1852, a convict informed the governor that the prisoners were planning a mutiny, like the rising on the *Justicia* hulk at Woolwich, and the military guard was reinforced. Five days later one Alexander Slidders gave the signal, and incited the men in No. 2 prison to mutiny. There was much shouting and cheering, but after a speech from the governor they all went quietly to their work. During the night Slidders tried to get out of the Separate Cells by cutting through the wall with the iron heel of his boot, and thenceforward it became the rule that a convict in the Separate Cells must put out his clothes and wear soft slippers instead of boots.

Dartmoor was an invalid prison, and it was not

consistent with the rational treatment of invalids that they should be for hours together in small cubicles by artificial light. Consequently at this time, and for many years afterwards, the cell doors were left open during the dinner hour and in the evenings, and closing the cell door was used as a punishment for misconduct. The din of conversation was almost deafening, and so little effort was made to control talking on the works that mutiny and combined insubordination could be planned under the noses of the warders. On June 15th, 1852, all unauthorised talking was forbidden, but the order produced so much disturbance and insubordination that on the 17th all the cell doors were kept shut, and not reopened until the men made some show of obedience.

On July 20th, 1852, the prison was visited by the Prince Consort. The Queen had been conveyed to Plymouth by sea, and as the Prince was climbing the hill from Dartmeet he heard the boom of the saluting guns announcing her arrival. The Prince made a thorough inspection of the prison, and the men on this occasion made no disturbance.

Besides reclaiming the peat lands for cultivation the principal work of the convicts was the cutting of peat for fuel and for gas-making. For this purpose the gas-house left by the Naphtha Company, which was in the north wing of the War-prison infirmary, was repaired, and the peat was brought to it by an

elevated tramway which crossed the boundary wall near the semaphore station. The line of this tramway may still be traced for a distance of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the prison. On November 8th a convict named Barrow disappeared from the gas-house by climbing up the chimney stack. It was believed that he had crossed the wall by the tramway bridge, though the sentry posted on the bridge declared that he had not seen him, and the usual hue and cry was raised through the country. But on the 10th the door of the night officer's quarters was broken open and his clothes stolen, which left no doubt that for two days the fugitive had lain hid somewhere within the walls until hunger compelled him to leave his hiding-place. Some of the clothes were pawned in Plymouth on the 16th, but the man was never recaptured.

An echo of the great controversy which made the year 1853 memorable in the history of penal administration penetrated to Dartmoor, where the records show an enormous number of free pardons. 'Throughout the first two years of the convict prison the courts were imposing sentences which, as everyone knew, could not be carried out. It was useless to sentence men to seven or ten years' transportation over-sea when Tasmania had refused to receive them, the hulks at Gibraltar and Bermuda were full, and Western Australia could not absorb a tithe of the annual criminal output of the mother country. The

last convict ship sailed for Tasmania in December, 1852, and the Government had on its hands 7,120 men whose sentences could not be carried out. It was necessary at once to cut off the supply, and the Penal Servitude Act of 1853 substituted penal servitude for transportation in the proportion of four years to seven. In order to reduce the congestion in the home prisons the Act empowered the Crown to liberate any convict on ticket-of-leave in this country, but before the Act became law a reduction was made by granting pardons to a number of selected cases. It will presently be seen that the exploits of some of the ticket-of-leave men caused a panic in the public mind which was disastrous to prison discipline.

At Dartmoor the conduct of the prisoners showed no change for the better, and the governor records his opinion that "invalids are the most unmanageable of all classes of convicts." On February 13th there was a blizzard, and the meat wagons were snowed up at Merivale. The prison was put on short rations, and a party of 100 convicts cut their way through the snow to dig a path for them to carry in the meat. They returned long after dark with the loss of one man, who was recaptured by a farmer next day almost frozen to death. Both water and gas failed, and three officers set out with spades to dig their way to Tavistock with the mails. During this snowstorm two privates of the Seventh Royal Fusiliers, then quartered in Princetown as a convict

guard, set out from Dousland to rejoin their regiment, and as they did not return a corporal set out from the village to meet them. The three men were found next morning in a drift near Peak Hill frozen to death. A tablet was placed in the church to their memory. Escapes and assaults on warders were frequent throughout the year. The fault lay, not so much in undue leniency, but in the difficulty of finding men of the right class to apply for the convict service, and it was to this that most of the trouble of the early days was to be traced.

The year 1854 opened with terrible weather : the snowstorm of January 4th was the worst for forty years. For five days the prison was entirely cut off from intercourse with the world, but on the 9th four strong parties of convicts cut their way to Dousland and brought up provisions. The weather was too much for many of the warders, who now began to send in their resignations. An assistant-warder who joined on February 16th resigned upon the spot, saying that he would not do an hour's duty in such a place. Unfortunately for the new experiment of compelling the mother country to consume her own smoke several of the burglaries and outrages committed in the early part of the year proved to be the work of ticket-of-leave men, and the public took alarm. At that time the principle of allowing convicts to earn a remission of part of their sentences by good conduct did not obtain as a system, and the men who were

liberated on license were not placed under police supervision for fear of damaging their chances of obtaining honest employment. The practice was this : when a convict had served three years out of a seven years' sentence, or four years out of ten, the chaplain addressed a letter to any person from whom the prisoner had hopes of employment, or, failing this, sent up a certificate of his fitness for work, and a ticket-of-leave was granted. If his conduct had been bad the process was delayed, but in the end he was discharged on license without any police supervision. The effect of the panic was to close all avenues of employment to discharged convicts, and in the state of the labour market of the time they were obliged either to beg or to steal. To continue to grant licenses in the irritated state of public opinion was impossible, and the convicts were informed that they would be required to serve out the whole of their sentences. This information reached Dartmoor in the middle of February, 1854, and threw the convicts into a dangerous state of irritation. On March 15th the whole of the men mutinied on parade, and four warders were seriously assaulted. The War Office had long been pressing for the withdrawal of the military guard, and as soon as this became known the sentries reported having overheard the discussion of a plan for a general mutiny as soon as the soldiers were removed. On April 18th the deputy-governor, Mr. Morrish, was attacked as he

was leaving the chapel ; three weeks later the chaplain was assaulted ; assistant-warder Hannifin was stabbed in the face, and a petty sessions was held at the prison to commit his assailant for trial. Warder Cunningham was cut down with a spade ; warder Watts was stabbed on parade. There were besides a large number of escapes. John Smith, who escaped from his cell on July 7th, broke into the medical officer's house, and, after demolishing the greater part of a ham, he stole a suit of clothes, leaving his own on the floor of the bedroom. At Two Bridges he succeeded in stealing a horse, but the owner seized him before he could get into the saddle. He was handed over to the Tavistock police, who conveyed him to Exeter for trial at the Assizes. On his return to Dartmoor after conviction the Chaplain went to see him, and asked him whether he was not sorry for what he had done. "There's one thing I *am* sorry for," he said thoughtfully ; "if I'd known I would be took I'd have eaten a bit more of that 'am." John Gray, who escaped with John Taylor from the parties working on the bogs on August 28th, was never recaptured. He broke into a farm near South Molton, and took a suit of clothes, leaving his own in a ditch, and that was the last that was heard of him. His companion was caught in Plymouth. Warburton, who broke from his party on December 21st, was shot in the thigh.

The military guard left the prison on April 20th,

1854. It was relieved by a guard of army pensioners, consisting of 2 sergeants, 2 corporals, and 36 privates. They were men of advanced age and impaired health. The number of privates was 14 short of the strength of the military guard.

On the same day Captain Gambier was transferred to Portland, and Mr. Morrish succeeded him as governor. Captain Furlong was appointed to the vacant post of deputy-governor.

The evil effect of depriving the convicts of any incentive to good conduct by allowing them to earn remission continued throughout 1855. The badges sewn on the sleeve of the jacket—V.G. for “Very Good”; G. for “Good”; O. for “Ordinary”; and B. for “Bad,” ceased to be an inducement to good conduct, and Sir Joshua Jebb, the Surveyor-General of Prisons, who had fought the panic in vain, seems to have hoped to feed the convicts into good behaviour. The dietary at this period was certainly excessive. The men had white bread instead of brown, and the quantity allowed was far more than the men could eat. The moor children used to come daily to the prison with baskets to collect the best of the food rejected by the convicts, and many of the moor families subsisted upon this, leaving more than enough to feed the pigs that had their sties inside the boundary wall. Convicts in the fourth stage were even allowed beer on Sundays. Discipline was very lax: the men walked in slovenly parties to their



work in a buzz of conversation and profanity. Many warders having been struck by stones thrown by an unseen hand from the gang in front, an interval of thirty paces was strictly kept between each party as they marched to labour, and this was the only regulation that was enforced.

The average number of convicts at this period was 1,040 and as only the most serious offences were dealt with, the average number of punishments awarded was four a day. Assaults on officers were of almost weekly occurrence, and, as always happens when discipline is lax, the authorities had to resort to heavy punishments for the more serious offences, and a dangerous spirit of hostility between the warders and their charges began to spring up. On August 3rd two convicts set upon the medical officer and severely mauled him. Matters were not mended by an indiscreet attempt on the part of the chaplain to improve the tone of the warders by preaching at them to a congregation of convicts.

On January 9th, 1856, there was a mutiny in the stone sheds, and a warder named Hogg was suspended for refusing to seize one of the mutineers. The men were overpowered before they could do any injury. On the 22nd there were three attempted suicides in one day. The assaults upon warders had now become so serious that in the worst cases the men were sent to the Exeter Assizes to be tried. On March 5th Michael Henry stunned principal warder Palmer by a

blow from a barrow handle, and during the investigation a convict named Gough coolly informed the governor that he had incited Henry to make the attack in order that he might effect his escape, and that if he were not also committed for trial he would follow Henry's example. A month later he carried out his word. Palmer had barely recovered from his wound when Gough made a second murderous attack upon him, fortunately without causing serious injury. The two men were tried at Exeter, and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment, as were three others during the year. Escapes were very numerous, but all were recaptured, even when they got as far afield as Sidmouth. James Cooper, who broke from his party on May 12th, was shot in the back, but a slug wounded the child of one of the pensioners' guard, who happened to be near the working parties. On August 25th James Lake, who had contrived to make a cell key out of beef bones, unlocked his door from the outside at two in the morning by tying the key to a stick and feeling for the lock through the ventilation space. He liberated Henry Beaumont noiselessly, and creeping upon the sleepy patrol in bare feet they disarmed him of his bayonet. They would have let out all the convicts in the hall, had not the patrol in the scuffle succeeded in ringing the alarm bell which brought the night orderly officer to his assistance, and the men were secured.

Among the other breaches of discipline the

destruction of clothing came into fashion, and this was such a common way of evading labour on the bogs that the governor tried the expedient of sending out the ringleader to work in the quarry in such garments as he happened to have left untorn, and a blanket to temper the blasts of November. A few days of this treatment changed the fashion. Three weeks later the same rough and ready treatment prevailed with a convict who was feigning insanity, and persistently refused to walk. When the order "March off" was given to his party four burly fellow-convicts lifted him up and carried him to and from the place of labour, and whenever they halted for breath, it may be guessed that they set him down rather suddenly, for he found his legs after a day or two. Thirty years later there was a case of far higher psychological interest. J. B., a man of some education, was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude for manslaughter. He had passionately asserted that the homicide was justifiable, and had sworn to the judge that the sentence should not be carried out. From the first day he refused to work, explaining quite respectfully that if he worked he would be abetting the judge in committing a judicial crime. He made a distinction between labour that was necessary and labour which was punitive. He would clean out his cell and help to carry the dinner trays; he would even march out to labour with his party; but neither persuasion nor punishment

availed to make him do a hand's turn of work for the public, though he knew that he was adding five years to his sentence by earning no marks for remission. In the end he was left alone, and he spent the long days in his cell—a tall, grey, silent man with pathetic determination stamped upon his features. Thus he had spent fifteen years a voluntary martyr to principle.

On January 28th, 1857, an escort of convicts from the *Defiance* hulk arrived at the prison. They had mutinied in the train, and two of them had forced their handcuffs and jumped from the train as it drew up at Plymouth station. They were never recaptured. On June 4th the pensioners were struck off the strength and their places were taken by the civil guard, which is now a very fine body of men.

The number of convicts was now raised to 1,158. There was no diminution of the violent attacks on warders or of escapes, in fact the discipline of the prison was going from bad to worse. On August 19th, 1857, there was a mutiny on the labour parade ground, during which five warders were assaulted. The riot was caused by want of tact on the part of a principal warder, and it was quelled with difficulty. Unfortunately, while the temper of the convicts was still irritable exceptionally hot weather turned the meat high, and on the following day the men turned out hungry, having been unable to eat their dinners. There was a second riot which

was only quelled by bringing a strong force of armed guards into the yard. On September 12th there was another outbreak of insubordination at supper time, the men shouting "No gruel!" "No cocoa!" Through all this confused din of mutiny floated echoes from the great world outside. October 7th was the day appointed for National Humiliation and fast for the Crimea, and the convicts spent the day in their cells.

On April 15th, 1858, three of the civil guard were suspended for refusing to obey orders and for inciting others to insubordination. The fact was that the conditions of service—the long hours of duty, the exposure to severe weather, the lack of all healthy recreation, the high cost of living and the wretched accommodation—were such as to repel candidates of the most desirable class. Appointments to the service seem to have been very carelessly made at this period, for on October 27th, 1858, a man joined for duty as a warder who had previously been dismissed for misconduct. He was allowed to do duty for a month and was then discharged.

The first step towards providing healthy recreation for the warders was taken in 1858 by equipping a reading-room and library. This was followed some years later by a billiard-room and a recreation-room provided with a stage for theatricals and space for dancing and social meetings. The scenery was

well painted by a convict who had been a scene-painter.

On October 22nd, 1858, there was a serious disturbance on the parade. Warder Goad, being assaulted by a convict named John Gough, used his bayonet to defend himself, and wounded his assailant in two or three places. The excitement was so great that it was thought prudent to relieve Goad from duty, which was well, as it afterwards transpired that there was a plot to kill him. For the growing insubordination Sir Joshua Jebb had no remedy but that of making the convicts more comfortable. As an inducement to good behaviour well-behaved men were allowed to wear liberty clothes on Sunday, to grow their hair and beards, and to write letters more than once a month, and men of exemplary conduct who had served more than five years were allowed to earn increased gratuity. As a humanising influence it was arranged that an educated prisoner should read aloud to the bag-makers while they were at work ; and, though this was continued for several years, the first experiment was not very encouraging. The reader had no sooner begun his labours in the weak-minded ward at the infirmary than a torrent of profanity and abuse put an end to the session.

During 1859 the lands about Rundlestone were enclosed, and a right of way claimed by the villagers was refused. The Plymouth Road had fallen into a

bad state, and the way-wardens pressed for assistance from the prison. A strong gang of convicts was set to repair it on the understanding that the service was voluntary and must not be quoted as a precedent.

On February 4th, 1860, there was a strike among the convicts. The "test party"—that is the party of men under test as to their fitness for Western Australia—No. 29, containing 16 men, who were engaged in reclaiming very wet and deep peat land at Park Corner—struck work and were marched back to the prison.

On the same day an escort, consisting of principal warder Brown and two assistant warders, left for Chatham. The convicts were secured by a chain from wrist to wrist. While the train was travelling at top speed between Reading and Maidenhead two of the men suddenly opened the carriage door and jumped out, and it was then discovered that they had cut through the chain. It was impossible to believe that this could have been done without the collusion of the officers in charge, and assistant-warder White was dismissed the service and principal warder Brown reduced in rank.

In April and May a number of time-expired soldiers from the Crimea were appointed warders, and it must be confessed that with a few exceptions they were not a success. Isaac Brennan, who had braved the trenches at Inkerman, found Dartmoor too much for him. He joined for duty on May 3rd, and

departed two hours later, saying that "he had had quite enough of the place."

It must not be understood that mutiny and insubordination were confined to Dartmoor. In September, 1858, there had been a serious mutiny at Portland, and in order that Dartmoor might not be unprepared the governor was directed to confer with the general commanding the forces in Plymouth as to the furnishing of military assistance if necessary. In February, 1861, there was an outbreak at Chatham, and fresh arrangements were made with the general in Plymouth which are still in force, though there has never been occasion to put them into practice. The governor has, in case of real emergency, the power to apply by telegraph for a contingent of fifty men. Sir Joshua Jebb's general order addressed to the Chatham convicts was read aloud on parade to the prisoners at Dartmoor. On May 7th, 1860, there was a disturbance on the labour parade. The mutineers were loudly cheered by the oakum gangs, and several warders were assaulted. The temper of the convicts was so bad that the warders on the parade were doubled, and it was not thought prudent to deal with defaulters until the excitement had subsided. As an illustration of the solidarity of the convicts it should be mentioned that a prisoner named White, who had received a year's remission of sentence for saving the life of a warder at Portland, and had been removed to Dartmoor for protection from his



fellows, was set upon and very seriously injured on the day following his arrival.

In 1860 a number of juvenile convicts were received from Parkhurst prison, and on April 1st two of these, named Ball and Robinson, who were not more than twelve years old, together with an older convict, cut through a window bar in the weak-minded ward of the Infirmary, and providing themselves with a rope of twisted oakum, ran along the top of a partition wall, and lowered themselves to the ground outside the boundary wall. They were never recaptured. All through December the frost was so severe that the prison ran out of water.

In 1861 the governor had to face a new trouble. Among the relics of old days preserved in a glass case in the governor's office is a shelf devoted to skeleton cell keys in all stages of manufacture, from the perfect key cut out of beef bones, brass, or solder, to the "blank" rudely fashioned and ready for cutting. These date from 1861. On April 23rd, 1860, a cell key was "lost"; it may have been dropped in the yard or stolen from the pouch of a careless officer who had neglected to fasten it to his chain, and it says much for the looseness of the discipline that the warder who had failed to hand back his key could not be identified. This key was extensively copied, for it must be remembered that the most expert locksmiths in

the world are to be found within the walls of a convict prison. On February 3rd, 1861, two skeleton keys made of sheet brass were found concealed in the clothing of a convict. The missing key was discovered in the woodwork of a closet in December, but it was too late, for on the following night a man let himself out of his cell and liberated two others, and they were discovered by the night watchman outside the building trying to force the skylight with a crowbar and a pickhead which the laxity of the searchers had allowed them to bring in from labour. Throughout these rather noisy proceedings the night patrol in No. 2 prison affirmed that he had heard nothing. On January 16th, 1862, a convict named Mallison was discovered in the act of making a skeleton key in his cell. In the following March at 8.30 p.m. the patrol saw prisoner Anderson look out of his cell door supposed to be securely locked. In his cell was found a skeleton key, a rusty door key, clothing, bread and meat and 4s. in silver. In the two contiguous cells skeleton keys were found. The trail of the lost cell key may be traced in the prison records for more than ten years.

There was the usual tale of escapes during 1861. On May 4th four men ran from the quarry without being missed. It happened that the governor's coachman was passing through Dousland on his way home when he noticed furtive figures reconnoitr-

ing his movements from the wood. Probably they intended to take the horse and trap, but he gave the alarm in Dousland, and so generalled his forces that the men were surrounded. On June 6th he again covered himself with glory by recapturing one Hancock in a fog, but that was his last success, for not long after, in a difference with his master's cook, he strayed so far beyond the limits of polite discussion that he was obliged to sever his connection with the prison. In 1905 a little silver-haired veteran presented himself at the gate, and quoted as his credentials for visiting the prison his prowess forty-four years before, but omitting, of course, any reference to his exploit in the kitchen.

It is curious to note that side by side with the well meant efforts of Sir Joshua Jebb to bring humanizing influences to bear on convicts the temper of the men grew worse. They had more food than they could eat ; they were allowed to talk almost without restriction ; they were read aloud to at their work ; they attended chapel morning and evening ; once a week one of the clerks delivered a secular lecture ; schoolmasters taught them to read and write ; their cell doors were left open at meal-times. Yet they were growing steadily more discontented, violent and riotous. It had not then been realized that men congregated together, whether bond or free, are never really

Captain Best, the deputy-governor, entered the building to ask the chaplain to proceed with the service he was knocked down by a prisoner named Greenfield. A few days earlier a plot had been formed to attack an unpopular warder named Gray. A convict feigned an epileptic fit, and as soon as the warder went to his assistance four others set upon him on the pretence that he was not treating the man properly.

All these disturbances at last found their way into the newspapers. On December 9th, 1862, the "Times" published a letter on the state of discipline at Dartmoor, signed "Ticket of Leave Holder," and on January 1st an alarming article appeared in the "Daily Telegraph" on the disturbance in the chapel. The local press had been for some time attacking the administration of the prison. The governor now demanded a public inquiry into the conduct of the prison officers, but this was refused. Matters were not improved by the extraordinary conduct of the Roman Catholic chaplain, who demanded the right of visiting Protestant convicts who were seriously ill in hospital, and asserted that more than one hundred Roman Catholic convicts were kept as Protestants against their will. It was in vain that the governor assured him that his suspicions were unfounded; he declined to believe him, and appealed to the Home Secretary against what he called the "tyranny of conscience" exercised by the governor, and asserted

that he had the names of over one hundred who would join his church if allowed. While this letter was under consideration he preached a sermon containing abuse of the governor, which in the existing temper of the men was practically an incitement to mutiny. As soon as the report of this sermon reached Whitehall the Home Secretary summarily dismissed him, and though Dr. Vaughan, the Bishop of Plymouth, interceded for him, he was not reinstated.

Some notable improvements were carried out during the year. The Directors of Convict Prisons paid £400 for laying a telegraph wire from the prison to Tavistock Station. A village school was built for the warders' children, and placed under the management of the incumbent and the chaplain. The Directors were also contemplating the building of a private line of railway from Princetown to Okehampton, and the governor, who surveyed the ground, reported that there were no engineering difficulties in the way.

On June 27th, 1862, Sir Joshua Jebb, Chairman of the Directors, died suddenly in London, and Colonel E. Henderson was appointed to succeed him. The public services of Col. Jebb had been very great. Thanks to his energy, his remarkable powers of organization, his foresight, and his indomitable perseverance in the face of opposition and unthinking panic, he had brought the abolition of transportation to a successful issue. The mother country had found it possible to consume her own smoke with-

out the conflagration that had been so confidently prophesied by those who posed as experts, and, so far from increasing, serious crime had shown a tendency to diminish. Jebb was a talented writer as well as an administrator, and it was largely due to his persuasive pen that panic legislation had been averted at a time when one of the great questions of the day was the menace of professional crime to the safety of society. Jebb's only weakness was his optimism and his over-trustful reliance in concession. Believing that even the more brutal natures would respond to kindly indulgence, he had tried to feed and humour the convicts into gentle behaviour, whereas a little less indulgence and a little more firmness would have rendered the constant resort to punishment unnecessary.

Colonel Henderson's first step was to revise the dietary, and the moor children could no longer fill their baskets with the broken victuals which the convicts could not eat. The men were made to march in an orderly manner to and from their work. Assaults had now become so common that the records cease to give names or particulars, and the temper of the men was so dangerous that arrangements were quietly made for drawing upon the Plymouth garrison if necessary. On September 7th the General visited the prison to inquire into the accommodation for troops, and after seeing the nakedness of the land he asked that soldiers should not be sent for except in cases of extreme emergency. The expected out-

break was not far distant. On November 1st a large body of convicts shouted at the deputy-governor when he visited the parade ground, and were ordered to have their cell doors shut at meal times and to forfeit their exercise on Sundays. At "cease labour" they refused to go to their cells, and the ringleaders were punished. On November 13th the prison was visited by the Director, and he had hardly left the prison when a serious mutiny took place. A gang of 269 men were employed in reclaiming the peat land in Roundhill field, near Two Bridges. Late in the afternoon, at a concerted signal, fourteen men rushed upon the civil guard flourishing their spades and shouting to the rest to join them. The guard coolly fixed bayonets, loaded their carbines, and closed in to meet them, threatening to bayonet or to shoot them unless they retired. The main body were hesitating, and the smallest show of weakness would have precipitated a general mutiny. The ringleaders halted irresolute, retreated step by step, and sulkily allowed themselves to be handcuffed, and all were marched back to the prison. A special messenger to Plymouth brought the Visiting Director back, and the ringleaders were sentenced to long terms of dietary punishment, the four leaders being removed to the penal class at Pentonville. The officers concerned in quelling the mutiny received the thanks of the Home Secretary.

The result of this outbreak was that no licenses

were granted to any convict who had not been clear of report for six months.

Early in 1864 the weak-minded convicts were removed to Millbank, and seventy-eight juveniles were received from Parkhurst to take their places. The roll of adult convicts was reduced from an average of 1,000 to 588.

On June 6th the new scale of reduced diets was introduced. The convicts stood it for a week, and then the agricultural parties struck work. Fifty-three men refused labour, but, as is not unusual in such cases, the man who had incited them quietly continued digging. They were sentenced to be kept on bread and water until they should express contrition. Sixteen resumed work after the first week, and all but thirteen a few days later. Ten of these were sent to the penal class at Millbank.

The boys proved to be even more troublesome than the men. They were of the same class as is now treated under the Borstal Scheme with such encouraging results, but whereas they can now be associated at labour with perfect safety, they were then a continual source of anxiety. In 1866, owing to the closing of the Roman Catholic Chapel at Parkhurst, the number of juveniles rose to eighty, and they concocted a plot to attack warder Rowe with their knives, which was fortunately betrayed in time. George Webster, who died in hospital on February 15th, 1865, had begun his career as a boy



at Parkhurst. He was cursing and blaspheming up to the moment when the breath left his body. To such a sorry end had come the scheme from which George IV. and the Prince Consort had hoped so much.

On October 29th Mr. Morrish, the governor, was transferred to Portland, and Mr. George Clifton appointed to succeed him. During the repairs to the governor's house, the roof and attics caught fire, and Mr. Clifton arrived just in time to see his residence in flames. One of the convicts worked so hard at extinguishing the fire that he became seriously ill.

The winter of 1864-5 was severe even for Dartmoor. On New Year's Eve, Owen Sweeney, one of the prison schoolmasters, set out from Tavistock to walk back to the prison in a snowstorm. The cottagers at Merivale Bridge pressed him to stop, but he persisted. As night came on and he had not returned to the prison thirty of the warders set out to look for him. Just above Merivale Bridge they encountered a huge snow-drift, and on digging into it they found his body in a kneeling position, and quite stiff. He had been dead some hours.

Three weeks later the snow was still five feet deep. The messenger bringing in the letters was obliged to leave his trap on Peak Hill, and ride the horse, and 300 convicts were sent out to open a way for the meat cart, and to clear the leat of snow. On

February 13th there was still a foot of snow, and 11 degrees of frost.

On May 2nd, 1865, there was a blasting accident at the prison quarry. A blast had missed fire, and three convicts under the supervision of a warder were engaged in flooding the hole and drawing the charge. After removing some powder they used the "searcher," when the rest of the charge exploded. Two men were frightfully injured; the third was blown into the middle of the quarry, where he landed on his feet and was almost unhurt. One of the men lingered in agony for three weeks and then died.

One of the regular industries in the summer was cutting and carrying turf for fuel, work for which the convicts showed their dislike by insubordination. On July 26th, John Butler, who was reported for refusing to carry turf, emphasised his disinclination for this form of labour by throwing his boot at the governor.

On October 24th, Mr. Clifton was promoted to Portland Prison, and Captain Stopford reigned in his stead.

Captain Stopford was the ablest governor the prison had had, and there was a marked improvement in the discipline and consequently in the happiness of the men. The only serious act of insubordination recorded during the year was on May 28th, when convict Arthur Stanmore cut down principal warder Castle with a spade, and would certainly have murdered him but for the promptitude of warder Moody.

On January 3rd, 1866, a convict undergoing close confinement for misconduct became seriously ill, and while under the fear of death he confessed to having committed a murder near Cheltenham some years before. He did not live to take his trial for the crime.

On January 11th there was a blizzard ; the wind blew with hurricane force all night, and in the morning all the roads leading to the prison were blocked by snowdrifts 15 feet deep. Some of the warders were exhausted by trying to make their way to the prison gate, and the prison was entirely cut off, even from the village. There being no danger of escape strong gangs worked all day at clearing the road, and only reached Rundlestone by the evening of the 12th, but on the 13th there was a tempest of rain, and the prison was flooded. On March 24th there was another heavy gale which blew in the chapel windows and flooded the building.

On April 15th, 1868, Captain Stopford was transferred to Portsmouth, and Mr. Butts succeeded him as governor. The number of convicts had been steadily declining until it was now under 650. The daily service in chapel was now changed from the evening to seven in the morning.

A curious discovery was made in September, 1867. In one of the Bibles given to discharged prisoners to take home with them was found a letter addressed by one of the Fenian convicts to persons in London,

containing suggestions of political outrages to be committed in London. Copies of this treasonable document were taken and sent to Scotland Yard.

During this year men who had forfeited their licenses or had been sentenced to penal servitude a second time were deprived of privileges they were formerly allowed to earn, and in December it became known that a plot was on foot to make a combined escape from the parties working on the bogs by overpowering the sentries. The authorities showed that they were prepared, and the plan fell through.

The muskets of the civil guard were discarded in 1868, and the Snider carbines were substituted—a musketry instructor being sent from Plymouth to teach the officers how to use them. These ancient weapons have since been bored smooth, but are still in use.

On December 18th, 1868, the Roman Catholic Chapel was completed and opened by Dr. Vaughan, the Roman Catholic Bishop, who held a confirmation in it.

On the 6th April, 1869, Captain Harris succeeded Captain Salter as deputy-governor. He was afterwards the author of a very interesting pamphlet on the history of the prison which is now out of print. He left for Woking on the 4th December, but returned to Dartmoor as governor in 1876.

During this year large parties of convicts continued to be sent from Millbank, bringing the roll of the

prison up from 603 to 872. On the 27th September the Home Secretary and the Solicitor-General made an inspection of the prison.

On January 7th, 1870, Mr. Butts was transferred to Chatham Prison and was succeeded by Major Hickey, the senior deputy-governor of Portland.

On April 14th a rope and an iron clamp were found hidden in a recess in No. 4 prison, and a portion of the corrugated iron wall of a cell of one Walter Scott was found to be torn down. It was strongly suspected that the rope had been introduced in collusion with a warder.

During 1870 a number of Fenian prisoners convicted of treason-felony were confined at Dartmoor, and owing to public agitation regarding their treatment a Commission was appointed to inquire into particular grievances. On June 10th the Commission sat at the prison and took evidence from all the witnesses who wished to see them, and afterwards visited the works and watched the operations of reclaiming bog land and cutting turf.

Major Hickey retired in 1872. Between Major Noot, the new governor, and his deputy things did not move altogether smoothly, but the discipline of the prison was much improved, for the warders were now being drawn from a better class.

In August, 1873, the Duke of Cambridge and his staff, who had come to inspect the division of troops encamped on the prison ground under the command

of Sir Charles Staveley, attended the chapel service. He described the discipline and demeanour of the convicts as "wonderful." The weather during the manœuvres was so abominable that the experiment of encamping troops on Dartmoor was discontinued for more than thirty years. The next camp was formed in July, 1904.

In October a series of scurrilous letters about prison officials appeared in the *West Country Lantern*. They were traced to an assistant warder, who was fined and placed under special probation. During this year the long prison known as No. 5 was completed. The granite had been quarried and cut by convicts, and the whole had been erected with no assistance from free labourers. It contains 272 cells, and though it leaves something to be desired in the matter of ventilation and heating, it has not been much improved upon by prison architects of later years.

On May 9th, 1874, No. 3 prison, which for more than twenty years had been occupied by convicts in association, was closed, and the opportunity was taken for locating all the prisoners according to the parties in which they were working, so as to break up the population into units, and lessen the chance of a general combination against authority.

Among the notable prisoners confined at this period were Michael Davitt (W822) and Thomas Castro (A1139), the Tichborne claimant. The

journals record that on December 16th Castro received a two-hours' visit from Dr. Kenealy. His conduct at Dartmoor, as elsewhere, was exemplary. At this period there was great laxity in the matter of visitors to the prison. During the summer parties of both sexes, numbering from 50 to 100, would assemble at the gate and be taken round the prison in relays by the messenger, who "sucked thereout no small advantage" in the matter of illicit gratuities, but during Castro's imprisonment the tailors' shop, where he was employed, was barred to visitors.

Michael Davitt was employed in the laundry, where the loss of an arm was of less consequence to him than in other form of labour. During the Treason-felony Commission he greatly impressed the Commissioners by the fairness of his evidence, for he brought no charges against individual officials, but only condemned the system. His attitude was summed by a remark in one of his letters: "Not much use appealing to English justice, I hear you remark. No!" He revisited the prison as a Member of Parliament in 1897, and wrote against his name in the visitors' book his office number as a convict.

The official attitude towards prisoners at that period may be judged by the fact that when the chaplain applied for permission to decorate the chapel for Christmas Day the request was refused. Such a

prohibition seems incredible to those now concerned with the administration of convict prisons.

The new alphabet in the registration of convicts began with 1875. Thereafter each year was designated by a letter of the alphabet, followed by the convict's number in the registry. Thus a man who is A<sub>4</sub> in 1875 and is reconvicted in 1880 would be AF<sub>4</sub>, and so on, each letter representing a sentence. There are now men undergoing penal servitude who have six letters embroidered on their sleeves and caps.

Captain Harris relieved Major Noot as Governor on July 14th, 1876.

As a result of the frequent complaints about the treatment of convicts, there was an agitation in the newspapers and in Parliament which resulted in the appointment of a Commission on Penal Servitude, which was attended by the governor in October, 1878.

In the previous June Lord Kimberley had visited the prison and had seen a number of the prisoners in private. As a result of his visit it was ordered that convicts should be allowed to petition the Home Secretary whenever they wished.

From this time the discipline was so good that there are practically no instances of serious insubordination to record. In January, 1880, the Home Secretary appointed visitors from the neighbourhood to make periodical inspections of the prison. The Earl of Morley, Sir John Duckworth, and Sir Colman



Rashleigh were the first. These visitors were superseded in 1900 by a Board of Visitors with judicial powers.

January 11th, 1881, was the night of the great blizzard. The stories of its terrific force on the moor have been fully related by Mr. Baring-Gould. The position of the prison was deplorable. Great drifts blocked the roads and cut the village off from all supplies. Coal and meat, lighting, and even water were soon exhausted, and to save the people from starvation, the governor began to slaughter the animals on the farm and sell them to the villagers. Men were obliged to burn the woodwork of their houses to cook their food, and for some time it was a question whether fires could be kept going in the prison. It was not until February 1st that the ordinary routine could be resumed. On February 8th there was a remarkable storm of hail, thunder, and lightning, in which one of prison cottages was completely wrecked.

It was the year of the discovery of luminous paint, and experiments were made at Dartmoor in the hope that artificial light could be dispensed with in a cell so painted, but the official report on the experiment says that though dark objects could be distinguished on the wall, it was impossible to see a prisoner when he was in bed.

In the autumn of 1881, excavations were made for the foundations of what is now known as 4c. prison,

and the excavators broke into the tunnel made by the American prisoners in 1815. It was very much as described by Charles Andrews—a low tortuous passage, reaching to within a few feet of the boundary wall. No tools were found in it, but the large stones which Captain Shortland had used for blocking the entrance were found still in position, and there was no trace of a new approach as described by Andrews. The news of the discovery spread through the prison, and on the night of December 2nd, 1881, the man whose cell was supposed to be immediately above the beginning of the tunnel made an heroic attempt to reach it by digging down through the cement floor. He was stopped by the large masses of stone thrown in by Shortland, and so the suit of clothes which he had sewn surreptitiously out of the police uniform he was making in the tailors' shop was useless to him.

Early in 1890 a negro named Joe Denny was discharged. Like most of the negro convicts, he had behaved very badly, and he left the prison vowing vengeance against the chief warder, but he was seen off by train and his existence was speedily forgotten. On the night of August 17th, 1890, the night patrol officer was startled by the ringing of the alarm bell connecting the semaphore station with the gate. This alarm is only used in the day-time, and the bell could only be set in motion by something

tugging at the wire between the two points. The night was very dark, and the artizans' yard and the whole length of the bell wire were inspected without result. Watchmen were posted at all the outlets, the reserve of warders was called up, and the governor and orderly officer made a thorough round of the buildings. As they left No. 2 prison a lantern was waved in the clocktower and an officer shouted "We have him." It was Joe Denny, who, as it seemed, had walked from London with the express intention of killing the chief warder, and had performed the unique feat of breaking into, instead of out of, an English convict prison. The village policeman was sent for, and he was handed over to him on a charge of burglary. It afterwards appeared that he had used an iron jumper which was found outside the carpenters' shop. In one of the sheds on the farm under a bundle of hay a fat ewe was found dead ; her head had been smashed in with a billet of wood which lay near, and a piece of flesh had been cut out of the shoulder and eaten raw. When before the magistrate at Tavistock Joe Denny admitted having killed the sheep, and said that he had intended to set the prison on fire, which indeed he might have done but for the timely warning of the bell wire. He was probably weak-minded.

On March 10th, 1891, there was another blizzard.

The train service was interrupted and the snow-drifts were so heavy that the gates of No. 5 prison could not be locked and a special watchman had to be stationed there. The two following days were spent in cutting through the snow-drifts, but on the 12th the gale began again and all communication between the village and the outside world was cut off. Meat was exhausted in Princetown, and the governor had again to kill the sheep and pigs at the farm. On the 13th the sheep began to die. A number of convicts volunteered for feeding the stock and cutting paths through the drifts, but their trenches were immediately refilled. The leat was so choked with snow that 200 men were working during the whole of the 14th to bring in water. On that evening the first portion of the mail of the 8th March reached the prison. During the next three days two or three people succeeded in making their way from Dousland, and on the 17th an intermittent train service was renewed. All this week the convicts due for release had to be detained, but on the 17th, the roads being impassable for wheeled traffic, they volunteered to walk to the station, and were so discharged.

In February, 1892, Captain Every, the Governor, died, and was succeeded by Captain Frank Johnson who, like most of the governors of Dartmoor, had previously served an apprenticeship as deputy-governor.

On March 30th, 1893, the Duke of Edinburgh visited the prison with a large party, and was shown round every part of it.

On August 21st a stranger drinking in the bar of Dousland Manor Inn was heard to boast that he had come to Devonshire in order to blow up Dartmoor Prison, where his brother was confined. The night-watch was doubled as a precaution, but nothing was seen of him. On February 9th, 1895, the wash-house caught fire, but thanks to the splendid conduct of the prisoners, it was soon got under. A second fire was discovered in time by the governor, who, on November 17th, noticed a curious smell in the drug store, where a bag of linseed meal had caught fire from spontaneous combustion.

The last five-and-twenty years have brought so many improvements in the *moral* of the staff and the treatment of the prisoners that a convict of the earlier decades would scarcely recognize the place. Under the modern policy of prison administration, the incidents that formerly broke the routine of prison life have been rare, and in its later years Dartmoor Prison may be said to have had no history.

A survey of fifty years of Dartmoor as a convict prison throws up into relief three periods of penal discipline, in the first—from 1850 to 1864—it was sought to buy good conduct and industry from the prisoners by indulgence, such as an excessive dietary,

and beer for men who had attained the fourth stage. At the same time there was a thoughtless insistence upon a uniform standard of labour. As long as men could walk, whether they suffered from heart disease or rupture, they were fit to move granite boulders or carry barrow-loads of turf. The convict of those days, to do him justice, if he was more brutal than his successors, did not grumble at work, but indulgence, side by side with lax discipline, is always mistaken for fear, and the early period was therefore the least hopeful. The second was the period of strictness, and lasted roughly from 1864 until 1880. This certainly had the effect of stamping out the worst forms of disorder within the walls and of reducing the contamination of the more innocent by the more hardened offenders, but the policy was governed by the idea that prisons were only to be deterrent, and while this may have had some success in reducing professional crime, it did not turn out many men better than when they went in, and it did turn out many worse. When the third period began these ideas were dying out among prison officials, and in many departments the work of trying to influence the men for good ceased to be regarded as a matter for the chaplain's department, and the better class of men came to realize that prison officers were their friends rather than their enemies. There was a steady improvement in the class from which the warders were

recruited, and now it may be said that there is no finer body of men in the subordinate ranks of the public service than the warders of Dartmoor Convict Prison. They are picked men from the Army and Navy, and from the industrial trades of the country, and they are imbued with a high sense of humanity, of kindness and patience, of duty and of loyalty. Thus while a higher standard of discipline is maintained than during the period of repression there is less friction and less punishment; and, as always happens when men in large bodies are kept under strict but reasonable and humane rules, there is far less discontent. The fact is that too much must not be expected of a prison. The causes of crime lie too deep in our social system and in our human nature to be reached at so late a stage in a criminal career as confinement in a prison reserved for old offenders. All that can be done is to concentrate the reformatory influences on those who are still at an impressionable age and to classify intelligently to prevent the hardened criminal from spreading his evil influences.

## CHAPTER XXII

### A CONVICT'S DAY

AT 5 a.m. the clanging of the bell sounds the *reveillé*, and 1,200 men tumble out of their hammocks, and wash and dress. The early division of warders troops into the hall, receives its keys from the principal warder, and takes the roll of each ward. For this purpose every prisoner pushes the button that shoots the signal flap outside the door. The roll of each ward is reported, and if the total corresponds with the number locked up on the previous night, the business of the day proceeds.

The doors of the men whose turn it is to be orderlies on each ward for the day are unlocked, and the slop tub is carried round to each door for the dirty water. Then the breakfasts, which have been brought into the hall by the cooks, who rose an hour earlier, are carried up in trays and baskets and distributed—a pint of gruel or porridge (or a pint of tea according to the stage the man has earned) and a loaf of bread. The breakfast has been cooked during the night by a night warder. Then patrols are posted, and the warders go to breakfast. During



the breakfast hour the convicts roll up their bedding, sweep out their cells, and make all snug for the day. Most of the cells are a marvel of cleanliness and order.

At 6.55 the bell rings and they are unlocked for chapel, whither they march two deep according to their wards. About 850 attend the Church of England chapel and 350 the Roman Catholic. The service lasts a quarter of an hour, and the men then file out to their respective parade grounds and fall in with their working parties. Of these there are forty-seven, of every kind of trade, and none can change his party without the consent of the Governor. When they have been searched and counted they march past the tally point, where the deputy-governor, the chief warder, and the orderly principal warder for the day count the men and enter the numbers in a book. Not a man must leave the prison until the total has been found to correspond with the roll of the prison for the day, but so rapidly is this done that they are seldom delayed.

At the back gate the civil guard are drawn up, and they fall into their places with the bodies of men to which they are assigned for the day. After passing the back gate the men divide. Three bodies of quarrymen flanked by six guards, and amounting in all to about sixty men, march up the hill and through the subway into the quarry; the guards taking up stations round the quarry head. The agriculturists, from forty to fifty men, march to their work at

the outskirts of the cultivated land, about a mile and a half from the prison, and one of their guards is mounted. Four parties of "agriculturists" amounting to about 100 men with nine guards and two principal warders branch off to the part of the farm where they may be required, either for digging or manuring or hoeing turnips or making hay. Meanwhile the boy convicts have harnessed their horses and strings of carts are sent out to any part of the farm where they may be required. The "privilege parties," consisting of the manure cart, the two ditching farm parties and the wall builders, go independently with a single guard to their work. None but men within a short time of their discharge are qualified for these. Inside the prison the remainder of the convicts go to their workshops, for almost every branch of trade and manufacture is here carried on. At a few minutes before eleven, according to the situation of the party, the principal warder blows his whistle. Tools are collected, hands are wiped, and the men fall in to march back for dinner. They are so timed as to arrive at the back gate as the bell rings at 11.10, and they file past the tally point in a continuous stream and are counted by the chief warder and deputy-governor to see that none of the 1,200 who marched out are missing. Thence they go to their cells and dinner is served. They have now more than an hour and a quarter for reading, cleaning their cells, receiving visits from the chaplain, or seeing the

governor or the doctor. Some of them, from a pure love of conversation, make a point of seeing one or other of these officers nearly every day, but the daily average is about thirty. At a quarter to one the warders are paraded and inspected. Keys are distributed, cells are unlocked, and the dinner tins collected by the orderlies. At one the men again assemble on the parade and march off for the afternoon work, returning at five. At 5.15 suppers are served out and the weekly bath or the fortnightly cell searching takes place, but on most nights the convict is free from 5.30 till 8 for reading. At 8 the lights are put out and everyone is in bed.

The routine is so regular and so monotonous that time passes very quickly. Some of the offences against prison discipline are in reality due to a revolt against this monotony, but characters are so different that it does not press hardly upon all. I remember a man who asked specially to be located on the top floor of No. 5 prison, which is the most unpopular landing of all. When pressed for a reason, he said evasively that he preferred to have no one over his head, but when I had induced him to be confidential he confessed that he was an old sailor, that reading made his head ache, and that he liked to walk up and down his cell, listening to the howling of the wind over-head, which made him think he was at sea again.

Generally convicts are always kind to animals, and I

cannot recall a single instance of cruelty. The care of animals on the farm seems to bring with it a sense of responsibility and self-respect quite out of proportion with the effect that such duties have on free men. The convict will devote himself heart and soul to nursing and grooming an animal for the show ring, and will swell with pride when he learns that his charge has carried off the first prize. Much of the success of the present flock of sheep is due to the care with which the old shepherd has nursed them through four terms of penal servitude. As the day approached for one of his occasional absences from prison he would say to the warder regretfully, "I hope, sir, that they will look after this ewe until I come back : I shall not be long away." This did not mean that he preferred imprisonment to freedom, but that, knowing his own foibles, he was speaking of the probability of the case. He was the only English shepherd I knew whose sheep followed him in Oriental fashion, and sometimes when a lamb had broken away and refused to be driven by the dogs, I have seen him come down from the farm and bring it in by calling it by name. This old man, as far as one could see, possessed a full measure of the Christian virtues. His only fault was the habit of breaking into houses when he got past the bounds of strict sobriety. His numerous friends and admirers felt at last that a supreme effort should be made to change his mode of life. His only surviving relation, a married sister

living in Texas, was traced, and through the generosity of a benefactor all arrangements were made for sending him out to her ; but an unexpected difficulty in the shape of the Immigration Laws of the United States caused delay, and while negotiations were in progress I regret to relate that he broke into a church, and was re-arrested. No man could have been more pathetically anxious to lead a new life than he was on the day before his release, and the only consoling thought in the story is the joy that he and his prison sheep must have felt on being re-united.

I remember looking down upon the chapel congregation during a sunny day in March, when a belated butterfly had settled in a patch of sunlight in the aisle just where the priest would step. After cautiously scrutinizing the faces of warders to assure himself that he was unobserved, an old man furtively used his cap as a broom to sweep the insect gently into a place of safety. Straws these, but they serve to show which way the wind is blowing in a convict prison. It is so with the care of the sick. Much of the nursing work is done by convict orderlies who have competed eagerly for their posts. The trained warder nurses are in charge, and to the orderlies are left those menial and sometimes nauseating duties inseparable from the hospital ward. These men cheerfully sit up night after night with dangerous cases. The patients are sometimes fractious and abusive, but the patience and gentleness of the

orderly does not fail, and yet the man may be the same who when employed at other work worried everyone with his grumbling about trifles.

Throughout the history of the prison there has not been a case where some special necessity called for volunteers to carry out work of a disagreeable or arduous kind, such as repairing ovens on Saturday afternoons, cleaning sewers, cutting roads through snow-drifts, where volunteers have not been forthcoming. All the best qualities of a man, as well as the worst, seem to rise to the surface in prison.

The prison library contains about 3,000 volumes, and library books are changed twice a week. A catalogue is on reference in every building, and in putting out a book for exchange the prisoner writes his wishes on his slate for the librarian. There is one ancient jest which never seems to pall. It is to advise a new-comer to apply for a book called "The Three Lazy Schoolmasters" (the schoolmasters are the librarians). The perpetrator expects that the victim will be reported for writing insulting language on his slate, but he is always disappointed. I remember one man, an illiterate, who complained that the librarian would not attend to his frequent requests for a book called "Less Miserable." He explained that it was written by one Hugo, that he had been told it was a very good book, and that he thought from its title it might "cheer him up a bit."

In the prison library authors have periods of

popularity and neglect. About ten years ago Shakespeare became fashionable, but there is now little demand for him. There is a general dislike for female authors, the only exception being George Eliot, Mrs. Wood and Edna Lyall. Most convicts do not care about Thackeray, but Scott and Dickens, who were under a temporary cloud a few years ago, have again become popular and there is an equal demand for the novels of George Lever, Wilkie Collins, Anthony Trollope, Blackmore and Hardy. The only foreign authors who are much read are Dumas and Victor Hugo, and the demand for these can never be satisfied. Strange to say there is a demand among convicts of good education for the *Boys' Own Paper*, though the boy convicts themselves do not seem to care for it. The works of Rudyard Kipling, H. G. Wells and Jules Verne are unpopular. Convicts explain this by saying that they are full of lies, but the great demand (alas for literature ! ) is for bound copies of the *Strand* and *Windsor* Magazines, probably because they contain reference to recent events. Among the boy convicts Mayne Reid, Ainsworth and Scott are the favourites, but there is a strong objection to boys' books. Next to these come technical works on carpentry and farm work, and after them the "Popular Educator." A few are working at French, Spanish and German, and there is always a demand for books dealing with subjects on which lectures have just been delivered.

It is a good sign that in their letters they should constantly advise their friends to buy and read certain books which they have just enjoyed. Some of the older convicts serving long sentences go through a regular course of study. There was one young man at Dartmoor who professed to have learned Latin, Greek and Hebrew in his cell, and to be now studying Turkish. His knowledge of these languages must have been the merest smattering, but he certainly worked hard. Another man, an old sailor who had taken to burglary somewhat late in life, professed to be studying geometry and navigation, but his favourite literature was the New Testament in Greek which he had contrived to learn at some period in his life.

The present farm dates from the earliest years of the convict prison. Besides the cutting of turf for fuel and gas (the peat retorts had been adapted to make gas for lighting purposes) the principal work of the convicts was reclaiming the bog lands and converting them into pasture. The conditions of the Duchy lease were that so many acres should be reclaimed and so many trees planted every year. Reclamation at this time was very imperfectly done. The practice was to take out the peat and bury the boulders under the upturned soil, cutting drains through the most boggy portions. The smaller stones were carried to the boundary of the field to form a wall. Unfortunately beneath the peat lies a



layer of stiff clay called the "pan," and unless this is broken through the soil remains waterlogged and soon reverts to peat ; consequently the older portion of the farm has to be reclaimed again to get rid of the rushes. Up to 1870 only the higher ground of the slope of North Hessery and towards Two Bridges were reclaimed, but during the 'seventies the farm was pushed out towards Fice's Well, and in later years towards the higher land of Greenaball. The total acreage of the farm is about 2,000, of which 1,500 are reclaimed and 500 rough boggy pasture. The present system is much more thorough. The pan is broken through and laid on the top, and after the clods have lain a year to be disintegrated by the frost, the soil is thoroughly manured and planted with turnips, a crop which never fails. In the second season grass seeds and rye are planted together. The rye is grown for straw, and the grass is ready for hay in the third season, after which for ten years it is laid down for hay and pasturage, and then the process is repeated. Formerly the ground was manured with lime ; it is now found that basic slag produces more permanent results. Cattle, ponies and pigs were first introduced, and though the stock suffered from anthrax, blackleg, and from the endemic of scanter, it has been very profitable. The dairy of about forty cows produces sufficient milk for the prisoners and the warders' families, and the annual sales of dairy produce exceed £900 a year. The ponies could scarcely now be

called "Dartmoors" for a number of famous pony stallions have improved the breed for fifty years. Hotspur, Comet and Confident George, to say nothing of Katerfelto and his Arab blood, are some of the best known. The prison ponies are famous for their endurance and good temper. They run to about 13.3 hands high, and before motors became common they fetched from £18 to £24 unbroken.

The breeding of cart-horses had an unfortunate beginning. Mr. Morrish, the second governor of the prison, made a bad bargain with the Commissioner of Police, under which he bought cheap a number of cast-off police mares for breeding purposes. All the blemishes for which their dams were rejected were reproduced in the foals, and it has taken more than twenty years to breed out this unsoundness. The shire stallions purchased from time to time used to take many prizes at the local shows. The same amateur farmer conceived the project of weaving black cloth in the prison direct from the fleeces grown on the farm, and as dyeing was not a prison industry, he collected in a single flock as many black sheep as he could procure. The result upon the prison flock was disastrous. The wool of black sheep is not black, but an indescribably hideous rusty brown, and when the plan was abandoned the farm bailiff insisted on getting rid of his black flock at any sacrifice rather than to continue to be the laughing-stock of all the farmers in Devon-

shire. One peculiarity of the black ewe is the habit of producing white and whitey-brown lambs, which was a distinct drawback to the experiment, for while the farmers were eager to sell their black lambs, the prison was disposing of its white ones. At present the prison flock is probably the finest flock of improved Dartmoors in England.

Pigs have always been profitable. They are the Berkshire breed, and they are very cheaply fattened on the kitchen refuse. The herd was killed off in 1901 owing to an outbreak of swine fever, but a fresh start was made, and it is now better than before.

The annual sale of farm stock has always been held on the day of Princetown fair in the first week in September, and it has now become a county institution. Twenty years ago the sales realized from £200 to £300, but they now exceed £1,700. The gross sales for farm produce amount to about £3,000 per annum.

In 1903 a new stable was erected by convict labour, with a large covered courtyard in which the sheep can be sheltered from the snow, and horses and ponies can be broken by the juvenile-adult convicts. It is probably the finest breeding stable in Devonshire.

## CHAPTER XXIII

THE spectacle of hundreds of men all clothed alike in an unbecoming uniform, all apparently silent and submissive, suggests a dead level in which no social ranks can exist. But human nature is stronger than human laws, and the social life of a convict prison pulsates steadily below the surface. Among the thieves from the large cities every man meets acquaintances of other days. The prison is divided into four units which never meet except in chapel, but gossip flies with a speed unknown outside the walls, where people have other things to occupy their minds. The wretched man who is suspected of being an informer has a sorry life. Though but one man in the prison suspects him scarce 48 hours pass before his supposed character is known to every man in his party. A muttered word, a furtive look, is enough to poison his life, and through the long evening hours in his cell he has time to brood over the slights and insults of the day. A "screw's man," a "policeman," are in such circles terms of abuse very hard to stomach. On the

other hand there are the aristocrats of professional crime—not indeed the gentleman burglar of modern fiction, who, if he exists at all, does not get laid by the heels—but the professional swindler who plays for high stakes, and sometimes condescends to become an employer of labour when humbler practitioners are wanted to further his schemes. Social consideration is, generally speaking, a matter of education, and such men are often well educated. As in the great world, talent of any kind commands respect in a convict prison; the skilled carpenter who keeps the chapel organ in repair, the cunning worker in metal who may turn his ingenuity to coining when he is at liberty; the baritone, once a singer in a famous minstrel troupe and now the soloist in the Roman Catholic choir, are the real aristocracy of the prison. It depends upon his behaviour whether the convicted gentleman enjoys any social consideration. If he gives himself any airs of superiority, or holds himself haughtily aloof, his life is a torture of pinpricks so skilfully administered that it is impossible for the authorities to protect him from them, but if he behaves like a gentleman, taking his share of work with cheerful good fellowship, but without familiarity, he acquires great personal influence over his fellow convicts. At Dartmoor gentlemen are rare; a few shady solicitors, an occasional doctor or clergyman, a university graduate who has gone hopelessly to the

bad, come there for their second term of penal servitude, but the majority are first offenders, and being admitted to the Star Class, serve their sentences either at Portland or at Parkhurst. Social consideration does not depend upon the class of crime which has brought a man to the little world except in one particular. There is a class of crime which is held in as healthy an abhorrence by convicts as by society outside, and if the unhappy man who has been convicted of it has any sense of shame he has a hard time. It is a healthy symptom, and it need not be overmuch deplored. The blackmailer also is held in some contempt. It may seem strange that though the crime is not known to anyone outside the governor's office, it should immediately be a matter of common knowledge to all convicts, although the criminal may do his utmost to conceal it ; but the explanation is that several prisoners are convicted together at each assize, and may have stood together in the dock to plead when the bills come from the Grand Jury. Personally a man may be as reticent about himself as a deaf mute, but in the passing interest which his arrival excites his companions of the same assize are skilfully pumped, and his criminal career, with spicy but imaginary details, is passed from mouth to mouth round the prison.

After a fixed time a well-conducted convict earns

permission to converse with a companion of the same grade at exercise on Sunday. They pair off in couples and walk round the yard in earnest, but subdued conversation. Their topics, one would expect, would be the gossip of the prison, but more often it is the legal wrong perpetrated at their trial. The man who is punctuating his sentences with energetic gesture is reproducing his own address to the judge and jury ; the other, whose remarks are received with passionate dissent, is pointing out the legal flaw in his argument, for old convicts are great lawyers, and can split hairs with extraordinary precision. Probably nine out of every ten really think that they are wrongfully detained, not, indeed, because they were not technically guilty of the offence charged against them, but because the sentence was excessive, and they know greater sinners who were more leniently treated, or because when they committed the act they had no fraudulent intent.

One comes very early in his experience to correct the popular estimate of degrees in crime, which is that the murderer and the ravisher are the most dangerous, and the thieves the least. Generally speaking, the murderers and other "accidental" offenders are not criminals, apart from their one criminal act. The circumstances that led to the crime—whether uncontrollable fury under provocation, or a long bout of drinking, or an access of

insane jealousy or lust—may never recur, and it has left them with their natural disposition unaltered. They are as God made them, naturally gentle or passionate, humble or proud, affectionate husbands and fathers, sometimes chafing, often patient and resigned—just such men as one rubs shoulders with every day, no more criminals at heart than the rest of us. These men are the good leaven of a convict prison, and were it not for them and their salutary influence upon the public opinion of the prison it would be a very evil place. It is to the men convicted of the lesser crimes that one must go to find the criminal at heart—to the crimes against property, to the men who live upon defrauding the widow and the orphan, the blackmailer, the receiver of stolen property, the cheat. Some of these know no honour nor pity. Even in prison they pursue their own ease and comfort through a sea of lying and infamy. Their amusement is to bait and bully some poor harmless old man until he turns on them and gets himself into trouble, for it is a fact that convicts suffer far more from the malevolence of their fellows than from the discipline of the place.

There is at Dartmoor, as in every aggregation of human beings, a public conscience. It is not the public conscience that we are accustomed to in the great world, but it is sufficiently strong to make it certain that if we could suddenly transport the whole



body to an uninhabited island and turn it loose we should find on revisiting it a year later that there would be a settled government with law courts and police, and a very stern criminal law. In analysing the public conscience in a convict prison one must be allowed without irreverence to cast it in the form of commandments :—

1. Thou shalt not curry favour or play the “copper” (*i.e.*, be loyal to the drab cloth).

2. Be swift to avenge an injury, but only with the weapons God has given thee. When struck think not of losing marks for fighting, but strike back : to turn the other cheek is to play the coward.

3. Thou shalt not take a loaf of bread from thy fellow, for this is stealing : to take from the dinner tray is no offence.

4. When tobacco has been entrusted to thee to distribute divide it equally.

5. Thou shalt not hide forbidden things in thy neighbour’s cell to get him into trouble.

6. When thou hast induced a warder to favour thee thou shalt not betray him to his superiors.

7. Thou shalt not over-work thyself and so cause the standard task to be raised, neither shalt thou shirk thy work so as to throw it upon others.

8. Thou shalt be kind to animals, tender and unselfish to the sick, stoical in endurance of pain.

The code breathes a spirit of courage, and when a net has been dragged through England with meshes so exceeding wide that none but the worst thousand have been landed within these walls, and this thousand frame such a code, who shall say that mankind can be wholly depraved?

THE END.



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